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I R E L A N D ;

ITS EVILS, AND THEIR REMEDIES :

BEING

A REFUTATION

OF THE

ERRORS OF THE EMIGRATION COMMITTEE

AND OTHERS,

TOUCHING THAT COUNTRY.

---

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SYNOPSIS OF AN ORIGINAL TREATISE,

*ABOUT TO BE PUBLISHED,*

ON

THE LAW OF POPULATION ;

DEVELOPING THE REAL PRINCIPLE ON WHICH IT IS UNIVERSALLY REGULATED.

---

BY

MICHAEL THOMAS SADLER.

---

“ DWELL IN THE LAND, AND VERILY THOU SHALT BE FED.”

---

L O N D O N :

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

---

MDCCCXXVIII.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE following pages were written as a supplement to a work on the subject of Population, now preparing for the press. The publication, in the first instance, of a part of a treatise, in which frequent references are made to the whole, is so unusual as to demand an explanation, even in times when the apologies of authors are little attended to, and, indeed, hardly tolerated. The circumstances which led to it, are these:—

Some time ago I delivered, to a Literary and Philosophical Society, in the north of England, to which I have the honour of belonging, a course of lectures on an important branch of our national economy, the Poor-Laws of England; connecting a defence of the principle of that system, and a view of its progress, with those practical improvements in its application, which the altered circumstances of the country seem to dictate, in order to restore its primitive character and efficiency. Little difficulty occurred in showing the legal provision for the poor to have been founded on the plainest principles of natural right and justice, as well as dictated by the most enlarged views of national policy; and still less in answering the objections urged against it under a very general mis-

apprehension that it has, considered in reference either to the population or the wealth of the country, imposed upon us an increasing incumbrance. Nor was it less easy to establish a very gratifying comparison betwixt the mode of preserving the poor, as established in this country, and the plans pursued in others, (few of which are destitute of public institutions for the like purpose,) in regard to its effects on the general character of the relieved, or even the economy, relatively speaking, with which it accomplishes its benevolent designs. Such were the arguments, amongst others of a similar tendency, then brought forward, some of which are briefly noticed in a subsequent part of the present publication; forming, on the whole, it was hoped, a satisfactory defence of our great national charity. One objection, however, and that of a most powerful nature, totally irreconcilable with the exercise of benevolence on any systematic and general plan whatsoever, and assuming the form and language of demonstration, remained unanswered; namely, that grounded on the modern “principle of population.” If, as that principle asserts, and professes to have proved, there be a constant tendency in human beings to increase faster than their means of sustentation, whatever be the arguments in favour of a general provision for the poor, whether founded on religion, or humanity, or policy, they are all unavailing,—the question is decided for ever. Give what-



ever latitude you please to the prolific powers of the earth, and to the creative efforts of human industry, you merely postpone, without evading, the conclusion ; human subsistence has necessarily its limits, those of the earth ; whereas, the prolific powers of increase, if unabated and unchecked, would, on the geometric hypothesis, conduct mankind to the inevitable catastrophe of universal wretchedness and want, were the globe itself converted into one solid mass of nutriment. But this theory is not content with investing itself with these prospective terrors ; it is announced as “ constantly and powerfully operating since the commencement of society\*.” In every point of view, therefore, it is fatal to the exercise of charity as a public and universal duty ; nor does it disguise its hostility. And it must be admitted that, allowing the truth of this principle of population, its conclusions, however abhorrent to our feelings and principles, are necessary and irresistible. Neither the doctrines of Christianity, however clear upon this point ; nor the dictates of humanity, though equally decisive ; nor the law of the land, which sanctions and enforces both ; can impose a duty upon us the practice of which is not only impolitic in its tendency, but impossible in its very nature.

The real difficulty of the question, disincumbered from the geometric and arithmetic ratios of increase, which are utterly irrecon-

\* Malthus, *Essay on Population*, p. 1, 4to.

cileable with human experience, is plainly this ; a principle of reproduction, which multiplies mankind with considerable rapidity, under certain circumstances, seems necessary to the spread, and indeed, in some instances, to the preservation of the human race ; and that it exists, is proved by the peopling of the world originally, or, by what may be to some a more decisive demonstration, by the rapid increase which still takes place in planting new countries and colonies. That this principle should, as far as nature is concerned, remain arbitrary and unalterable, involves the consequences already mentioned ; that is,—admitting the eternity of the world, which is necessarily one of the postulata on which the boasted demonstration of the modern principle of population is founded. That the earth, which, it is confessed on all hands, is at present very inadequately possessed, containing probably not a hundredth part of the population it is capable of sustaining, shall remain, till, in the course of ages, it shall become wholly incapable of supporting its increased numbers, may exist as a mere possible supposition, consistently perhaps with the letter, though not very reconcileably with the spirit of revelation ; but to assert as a fact, that that period will inevitably arrive, contradicts both. Put forth as a demonstration, I repeat, it identifies itself with infidelity ; assuming the eternity of the world as a necessary part of its proof, it asserts that to be true which

Christianity declares to be false ; and a period to be certain and foreseen, which its Author has declared to be uncertain and unknown. Arguing, then, in a country professedly Christian, and in one which, though densely peopled, contains so many millions of uncultivated acres, and forming so minute a part of a world all but entirely waste ; the cultivated parts of which, as Franklin has somewhere observed, would, if viewed by a Herschell's telescope from the moon, only appear, here and there, like so many luminous spots upon its disk ; it might have sufficed, one would have thought, to have reposed, for the present at least, on the bounties of that Being who has been the "dwelling-place" of so many generations ; and if we could not have brought our minds to expect that He might do in the later ages of the world, what we are instructed to believe He did in its earlier ones,—proportion the fecundity and duration of the life of human beings to their numbers ; still, that he would accomplish his purposes regarding His universe, before His providence should become impaired or exhausted ; that if His mercies are not everlasting, they are, at least, calculated to endure till "the great globe itself, and all that it inherit, shall dissolve," and the baseless fabric of the vision of human life shall resolve itself into the realities of eternity — a period actually foretold in every part of the Christian records, and described as one, not of increasing want

and suffering, but, on the contrary, rather of luxury and enjoyment; not when the preventive check shall be called into full operation, but when the world shall be “marrying and giving in marriage.” But these arguments, however satisfactory to the bulk of mankind, for so they happily are, appear far otherwise to many of those who discuss the important subject before us. The philosophers of the day, indeed, are very witty on such who, in reference to it, “cant about God and Providence;” and one of the first and sublimest passages which Revelation puts into the mouth of the Deity, “Increase and multiply,” instead of being any longer regarded as the “command and blessing of Providence\*,” is dexterously resolved into an inhibition and a curse, or too often quoted only to be contradicted and ridiculed. No matter that it still harmonizes with the purest feelings, and conduces to the best interests of mankind, whether considered in their individual or collective capacity; no matter that its breach would defeat the will of the Deity, and degrade and destroy the species;—it is adverse to the geometric theory, and that suffices. Thus, as one never charged with too enthusiastic a regard for religion observes: “The mathematics are to be every thing, even where they are ridiculous, and men repose no more confidence in GOD than they would in a broken merchant.”

Pursuing the argument, therefore, without

\* Burke.

any reference to the principles, or, as they are too often regarded, the prejudices of either natural or revealed religion; on a thorough examination of numerous facts connected with the physiology of the human race, the true principle of increase was discovered, and, by a series of calculations, all terminating in the same results, I hope it may be added, fully demonstrated; a principle of greater efficiency in accomplishing one of the necessary purposes of reproduction, that of first replenishing the earth, or still peopling different parts of it, than the one it opposes; and, on the other hand, totally free from the appalling consequences to which that necessarily leads; and, above all, in reference to the subject then under consideration, delivering one of the most exalted duties of Christianity from the objections by which it is now assailed, and reconciling its constant and systematic discharge with the laws of nature, and the present and permanent interests of mankind.

The principle of human increase thus obtained, may be very briefly enunciated, and is simply this: The fecundity of human beings is, *cæteris paribus*, in the inverse ratio of the condensation of their numbers; and, still in direct contradiction to the theory now maintained, the variation in that fecundity is effectuated, not by the wretchedness and misery, but by the happiness and prosperity of the species.

That mankind cannot possibly multiply be-

yond the means of sustentation is an obvious truth, and common to both theories. The distinction between them, therefore, and it is one of incalculable importance, both as to the principle and its consequences, is simply this ; the one invests human beings with a superfecundity which can only be regulated by vice or misery, or by that which is a compound of both, and, practically, more degrading and disgusting than either—"moral restraint:" while the other maintains, that the law of human increase adapts itself to the existing numbers of mankind, and has for its regulator the prosperity and happiness of the species. That the latter theory, assuming its truth, best comports with the welfare of mankind, admits of no dispute ; *à priori*, therefore, the presumption is, that it is the law of nature and of Providence ; on due examination it will be found that the presumption rises into certainty.

Before any appeal is made to the calculations by which this principle of increase is established, it may be proper to remark, that the idea thus broadly stated, is in strict accordance with the physiology of the human species in reference to this subject, as propounded from the time of Hippocrates, and maintained, I believe, unanimously, down to the present hour. Excluding, of course, cases of extreme distress, a state of labour and privation is that most favourable to human fecundity. A dispersed and scanty population



invariably implies that state ; but as mankind advance from the hunting to the pastoral, and from thence to the agricultural stages of existence, and ultimately rise to the highest condition of civilization, labour becomes divided, and consequently diminished in its duration and intensity, and many are liberated from its drudgeries, so as to devote themselves to other and more intellectual pursuits, or are rendered independent of it altogether, while the means of subsistence become progressively augmented, and ease and luxury more generally diffused. At every step the principle of increase contracts, and, as I contend, would pause at that precise point where it had secured the utmost possible degree of happiness to the greatest possible number of human beings. Meantime, it must be remarked that, in this auspicious progress, their moral and intellectual advancement more than keeps pace with the improvement in their natural condition ; while the climate, the seasons, and the face of nature itself, participate in the universal blessing of an enlarging population.

Having, as I conceived, ascertained the reality of this benevolent law of nature, I thought it necessary to examine, with the greatest attention, the proofs and arguments by which the contrary theory professes to be supported, when all of them seemed to resolve themselves into so many direct evidences of the more cheering view of the subject, leaving not a remaining

doubt as to its certainty and truth. Impressed with its importance, I therefore extended the argument beyond my first intention, of rendering it merely subservient to a defence of the poor-laws ; and, I may, perhaps, be permitted to say, the inquiry has been pursued with the utmost diligence ; with what success the public will speedily be enabled to judge. In the mean time, a very brief notice of some only of its leading points becomes necessary, in consequence of having been induced to publish the present part of the work in the first instance, for reasons, which, it is hoped, may at the present moment justify so unusual a course.

In the first book, the principles of the prevailing theory of population, as propounded by Mr. Malthus, are examined, especially the geometric and arithmetic ratios, which are proved to be misplaced ; and the checks which are supposed to reconcile their adverse tendencies are shown to have diminished in their operation as population has increased ; contradicting, consequently, the theory they are brought forward to support ; more especially the preventive one, which is the main reliance of the whole system. This, by a strange and fatal error in the principle of its calculation, has been supposed to increase in its prevalence as the theory requires, when, in point of fact, it has diminished in every country, and especially in those of which the contrary is the most confidently asserted. The disputed ques-



tion of the precedence of population to food is likewise discussed, and the priority of the former is shown to be the order of nature, being not only the means of producing and dispensing plenty amongst human beings, but, by the creation of that sole spring of human exertion, necessity, of advancing mankind through successive stages of civilization, and preserving them from relapsing into barbarism. In this book it has been found necessary to show the utter destitution of all claims to originality, either in regard to its principle, or the terms in which it is propounded, of that theory which is regarded by many in the light of a discovery; and this, not for the purpose of settling a point of authorship, but to show that it is one of those many systems which, as Aristotle observes, the wisdom of preceding ages has examined and rejected, and the ignorance of subsequent ones succeeded for a time in reviving. Generations ago, the notion of the superfecundity of human beings was expressed in quite as forcible terms; supported by exactly the same arguments; and precisely the same remedies were propounded for the "evils it occasioned," as at the present day. It was a doctrine, moreover, which had as many advocates then as now, but it was met by the arguments and the abhorrence of the greatest and the wisest of our countrymen; and however often it may be revived by selfishness and ignorance, it will descend so branded to the remotest posterity.

In the second book an appeal is made to the experience of mankind in different ages and countries of the world, particularly those which have been referred to for a contrary purpose; and it is shown that whenever and wherever the population has advanced, instead of the individual shares of the means of subsistence having been diminished, directly the contrary has been invariably the effect; and that not only has the quantity of food increased in a superproportion, but that its nature and quality have undergone as striking an improvement. The proof, indeed, extends to the animal creation: as population has multiplied, the surplus food has sufficed to sustain a far greater relative and still increasing number of those animals which are kept by man for convenience, pleasure, or display, and which, in an advanced stage of civilization, consume so large a quantity of the products of cultivation.

On the other hand, it is clearly shown that in every country where the inhabitants have unhappily diminished, there, instead of the means of subsistence having been more liberally dispensed, the population has been invariably still more degraded and reduced in condition than in numbers.

In the former part of this book, a view is taken of the history of Greece and Rome, and other ancient states, in relation to this question, and the opinion of the ancient philosophers and legislators is shown to have been very dif-

ferent to what is now represented ; their fears, generally speaking, were excited by the evils of a declining rather than an enlarging population ; fears, prompted by the facts they witnessed and recorded, and which futurity has confirmed in so striking a manner. It may be added, that the character of Plato is completely rescued from the imputation of his having ever contemplated infanticide as a regulator of the population of his imaginary Republic, much more from his having recommended it.

In this branch of the argument, which necessarily extends to a very considerable length, the history of our own country, as incomparably the most interesting and important part of the inquiry, is particularly attended to. It is hoped that facts as conclusive as they are curious are brought forward, in proof that England has confirmed, in every period of its history, the principle of population for which I contend, as that of nature and of God.

The succeeding section of the work is devoted exclusively to the consideration of the population of China and America ; the two main pillars of the contrary theory—the latter, as it is supposed, exhibiting the principle of human increase doubling itself at the presumed intervals by procreation only, as in actual operation ; and the former, as furnishing an example of that principle having advanced to its utmost limits, arrested by necessity, and “kept down to the level of the means of subsistence” by those

distressing and disgusting checks which the theory enunciates. These being the only practical demonstrations of the system opposed, particular attention has been paid to each. And regarding the latter, if we may be permitted to dismiss the authority of the "*Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*," the "lying missionaries" of Adam Smith, in favour of modern authorities, and amongst these, especially, our own scientific countrymen, this appeal, so constantly made, is completely silenced. China is now known to be a country very sparingly inhabited, excepting, perhaps, upon the borders of the grand canal, and often so, even there. Malte-Brun, from the numerous authorities he consulted, estimates the number of the Chinese at considerably less than half that given to Lord Macartney by the veracious Chow-ta-Zhin, in a document which he ridicules, and which, on the face of it, is a palpable forgery. Mr. Malthus, however, I perceive, with an unaccountable pertinacity, still continues to put forth this statement, even now that several official censuses of China have been published within a few years past, all of which, agreeing with each other, confirm the recorded opinion of every recent writer of credit who has had an opportunity of judging on the subject, that China, in reference either to its extent or fertility, is decidedly one of the worst peopled countries upon earth. If the Chinese, therefore, are plunged in the misery Mr. Malthus describes, and resort to infanticide in order to repress their

numbers (a fact, however, which the latest and best writers seem unanimously to discredit), China becomes one of the strongest proofs in favour of the argument I am maintaining. In England there are two hundred and twenty-seven inhabitants in the square mile; in China, with her boasted soil and double harvests, there are ninety-seven only.

But to the population of America, far better known than that of China, and on which the theory I am opposing professes to be mainly founded, still more particular attention has been paid, and by a series of proofs and calculations, which extend through several chapters, it is clearly shown that the geometric ratio of increase has no existence even there, much less that the increase actually taking place is independent of emigration. Both of these conclusions rest on a variety of proofs, founded principally on the American censuses themselves. Two branches of the argument, however, shall only be alluded to on this occasion; either of which is perfectly decisive. A very few years subsequently to the period when Mr. Malthus reports the settlers of New England as amounting to twenty-one thousand two hundred only, adding, that it was calculated more left them afterwards than went to them\*, (a number which, without the least examination, is palpably incorrect and irreconcilable with the importance of our North American Colo-

\* Essay on Population, p. 338.

nies, even at that early period) we find, on the authority of the reports of the governors of the respective states now existing in the public offices at home, that the inhabitants, then principally confined to New England, amounted in the whole to considerably upwards of two hundred thousand souls; so that if the geometric ratio contended for had been true, there would have been at least twice as many inhabitants in the United States as exist there at the present moment, had there not subsequently gone a single emigrant to the American shores. The particulars and dates of the enumerations alluded to are given, and a history of emigration from thence to the period when America became, as one of its most intelligent writers observes, "the colony of Europe," is subjoined, by which it is conceived the fallacy of the strange assertion, that emigration has been "immaterial" to the rapid growth of its population, will be fully apparent. The admission of an annual accession of ten thousand, with an increase of three per cent. upon that number, instead of being "immaterial" would, I think, as calculated by logarithms, amount, in a single century only, to more than six-sevenths of the entire white population. But no such annual increase as three per cent. can possibly take place on an entire population, by "procreation only," consistently with the established laws of nature, developed under the most favourable circumstances. The error, however, of attri-



buting to these accessions, consisting, as generally speaking they do, of individuals in the prime of life, and principally of young men only, the ordinary rate of increase of an entire population, comprising individuals of all ages, is pointed out; though the supposition is almost too absurd to require notice.

A variety of tables are subjoined, calculated on data which American statistics furnish, showing the pretended demonstration, that the population there increases in the ratio so often and so confidently asserted, is not true, nor even possible.

In the fourth book, the mis-statements of numerical facts, and errors in calculation, by which the theory I oppose is attempted to be supported, are exposed; one or two instances of which only shall be noticed in this place. Mr. Malthus, the main advocate of that principle, not satisfied with attributing to it many of the evils we suffer at present, invests it with powers of a far more dreadful nature than have been as yet developed; he says, "not more than one half of the prolific power of nature is called into action in this country\*," intimating that, if nature were unchecked, "there would be one annual marriage out of sixty persons, instead of one marriage out of one hundred and twenty-three persons, as is the case at present."† This is most strange, especially as he has, in his previous calculation, recollected

\* Essay, p. 304.

† Ibid.

that it requires two individuals to form one marriage; consequently, upon his supposition, one person would annually marry out of every thirty, whereas there is in England only one annual birth in every thirty-seven inhabitants; it follows, therefore, according to that author, that were it not for the operation of his "preventive check," there would be about one-fourth more individuals married in this country than are born! If we turn to the census as divided into ages, and suppose the sexes between fifteen and twenty to be exactly balanced, and that all at that period of life should enter into the marriage state, it will be seen that only about one marriage in one hundred inhabitants could annually take place:—nay, if all were united at the font there could only be one in seventy-four. But the foregoing supposition is merely the echo of an opinion expressed by Dr. Franklin in his juvenile days, (from whom, indeed, the former professes to have partly derived his notions on population,) that in America there is one annual marriage to every fifty inhabitants; and, as it seems to be in the very nature of the arguments on human increase not to be easily satisfied, Mr. Warden has further improved this proportion into one in every thirty. Now it happens, that in the last American census there is a column given which expresses the number of the males from the ages of sixteen to eighteen, and if every individual of these were to marry at the mean age of seventeen years, only one marriage in



eighty-six inhabitants could possibly take place\*. Such are the errors into which writers on population fall on this important point, which it cannot but be acknowledged are so far from being slight and immaterial, that they are necessarily subversive of their entire theories and calculations. Other mistakes of quite as gross and obvious a nature, such as the supposed operation of the preventive check in different times and countries, the effects of epidemics upon registers, and on a variety of other subjects, are fully exposed, but will not be further alluded to on the present occasion.

Such is a slight sketch of the negative part of the argument, if I may so speak, by which the true and benevolent principle of population is supported ; a system which it will be seen is, from first to last, inducted from a series of decisive facts which the history of the world uniformly presents, and sanctioned by the equally unanimous authority of the greatest and the wisest men it has ever produced. In a day, however, when past experience is but little regarded, and authority not at all ; when an appeal to the ancient permanent sense of mankind would often actually prejudice a cause in behalf of which it is made, amongst the “pert and noisy pretenders of the day ;” it is happy for the interests of human nature that the true principle of increase

\* The superior longevity in England may account for the smaller relative proportion of possible marriages at about the same period of life in England.

is demonstrable upon a basis unassailable by such ; ancient events may be misinterpreted or disputed ; authorities may be neglected or despised ; but still the principle announced can never be shaken ;—it is not so much a matter of reason as of arithmetic ; it rests not upon arguments, but upon facts.

To a short synopsis of the fifth book of the treatise, about to be published, the reader's particular attention is, therefore, solicited, as substituting a system in the place of the one dispossessed, and establishing it by a series of tables and calculations amounting in every instance to a proof of its truth. These, spreading over some hundred pages, cannot now be given, however essential to the argument ; the author can, therefore, only stake his veracity to the reader for the truth of the statements about to be alluded to, a pledge which he hopes speedily to redeem ; and it is a matter of doubt with him whether any thing further than the heads of the ensuing argument need to have been given on the present occasion.

The law of population, by which the increase of mankind has been and still is, in all cases, regulated, is simply this : THE FECUNDITY OF HUMAN BEINGS, UNDER EQUAL CIRCUMSTANCES, VARIES INVERSELY AS THEIR NUMBERS ON A GIVEN SPACE.

Merely premising that, as mankind multiply in any country, the thinly-populated districts become more crowded ones, and these again

rise into towns and cities, and *vice versa* on any diminution in their numbers: I proceed to demonstrate the truth and reality of this graduated scale of human increase.

First, By a comparison of the fecundity of marriages in different countries, all of which, where the necessary information is recorded, class themselves in precise conformity with this principle, and are the more prolific the less they are peopled. The objection that, in the latter case, greater plenty prevails, and marriages are more frequent and more early, is anticipated and refuted. The contrary is strictly the fact\*.

2. By showing that in the different local divisions of one and the same country, the same law of population prevails; and the varying fecundity of the marriages is determined accordingly. This section of the argument is of peculiar importance, as it not only shows its operation by a series of more minute and particular proofs; but, at the same time, it entirely obviates the objection which might be raised, and not unreasonably, in reference to the comparative accuracy with which different countries may furnish the data on which the

\* The apparent exception of newly-planted countries and colonies which had the advantage of proceeding from more densely peopled nations, and still retain the benefit of having access to such for their products, is fully considered. Cut such off, even now, from the latter privilege only, and left to themselves, the rule of nature, which distributes the greatest measure of its bounties wherever there are the greatest number of human beings on the same space, would be instantly apparent. The reason why it is, to a certain degree, otherwise in Ireland, it is one of the prime objects of this publication to point out.

preceding proof is founded, and the various habits which may be supposed to affect, in no slight degree, the question at issue. But when the different divisions, and even subdivisions of the same country, furnish the demonstration that human fecundity is thus graduated, no such objection can possibly be urged, and the general argument is invested with that circumstantiality of evidence, which invariably makes the most powerful impression. A corroboration of the like kind, though still more curious and minute, is given under the next head, in which the varying increase of human beings is proved to be regulated as before explained,

3. By showing that the difference in the fecundity of marriages in towns is, in like manner, determined by the number of their inhabitants.

It is plain, however, that the theory, if true, is capable of a species of historical evidence ; and such is again the fact. Not only, then, is the principle proved to be in actual operation by these comparisons between the varying degrees of fecundity in different countries and districts, but its truth is furthermore confirmed,

4. By showing that in the same countries and districts, compared at different periods, the fecundity of marriages has diminished as their population has augmented ; and this universally, wherever the facts necessary to form the conclusion are on record. Lest it should be once more objected to this striking demonstration, that this is attributable to increasing

misery or moral restraint, I will mention that this supposition also is clearly refuted.

The argument is, however, susceptible of another distinct order of proofs, though, happily for mankind, of far rarer occurrence than the former ones. That human beings multiply inversely as their numbers, is proved,

5. By showing that, on any great and sudden diminution in the inhabitants of any country, city, or district, the fecundity of the remainder has become instantly increased. To this surprising, and, as it respects the subject under consideration, decisive fact, I have given the most minute and persevering examination, and have found it, as a law of nature, invariable and universal. So certain is it, that its operation is distinctly visible on observing the conceptions of particular periods, as constantly influenced by those slighter variations in the deaths which occur in this and other countries, as well as by those sweeping mortalities, which have been occasionally experienced; when, indeed, the effect alluded to has been not unfrequently observed and recorded; though never referred to that general law of nature, of which, when viewed in any considerable number of cases, it clearly forms a part\*.

\* This surprising fact has, indeed, been latterly remarked, but has been ascribed to a cause which has obscured the deduction which ought to have been drawn from it, if not, indeed, reversed it. It has been resolved into an increased number of marriages, which, it is assumed, mortality occasions; particularly by Mr. Malthus, who is very full of this idea throughout. Prepared by the theory already shortly propounded, to maintain that a diminution

The preceding theory, and the facts by which it is substantiated, are furthermore corroborated,

in the numbers of a population is not the means of increasing the plenty and prosperity of the remainder, (which idea, if it be a paradox, is one for which Providence, and the history of human beings is accountable,) and entertaining a higher idea of human nature than to suppose, that in this, or any other country, "the funeral baked-meats do coldly furnish forth the marriage table," or, in other words, that a time of excessive mortality is that of increasing matrimony, I examined this matter thoroughly, and found, as I had expected, directly the contrary to be the fact. Mr. Malthus alluded, and I observe still does, to a single table of Sus-smilch, how fairly I shall show; I have gone through the whole of them, as well as those relating to all other countries, to which I have had access; and I confidently pronounce, and shall assuredly prove, in reference to this subject, a truth as surprising as it is important and certain; that a period of greater mortality is that of greater fecundity; being, at the same time, as invariably one of a diminished proportion of marriages. This will be found true on examining a sufficient number of instances, in every part of the world.

I am the more diffuse upon this particular proof of the principle of population previously propounded (which, in the work referred to, occupies several chapters) from its direct bearing on the propositions respecting unhappy Ireland, my immediate subject. Granting the principle to be true, which it most certainly is, that to diminish the number of human beings, is to increase the fecundity of the remainder; and in what sort of an attitude do those place themselves, who are for interfering, by cruel or revolting expedients, with the established order of nature, whether by clearing farms and villages, driving and deporting the inhabitants, or by any method whatsoever, creating, to use the heartless term of the day, those vacuums which an irreversible law of Providence will assuredly replenish in spite of all their efforts? That such has ever been the consequence has long been apparent, the reason is, I speak confidently, now unfolded; let all such, then, pause in a course which has, perhaps, hitherto been excused by ignorance, but which, persevered in, will be that of presumptuous folly as well as of wanton cruelty.

Furthermore: If this last developed principle be true, can anything further be required, I would ask the candid mind, which still retains its confidence in the kindness of Providence, and its belief in the existence of a GOD, in order to disprove and demolish the theory of human increase, which it is the business of this work to oppose? For can it be credited, for a moment, that a diminution in the numbers of human beings is, in any case, a benefit to the remainder, as is now so confidently and unfeelingly main-



6. By an appeal to the physiology of the human race. This, as expounded by the highest authorities, ancient or modern, fully reconciles the preceding views upon the subject with the facts adduced, and even demands their adoption. That want promotes reproduction, and that repletion retards it, I prove, in this section of the book, to be an universally acknowledged physical fact; and it is one, which, without the least violence, resolves itself into a principle which regulates human fecundity, not by the misery, but by the happiness of the species. It may be repeated, that where society, as in its first stages, is the most scattered, there is it that there are, necessarily, the most labour and abstinence; a state so decidedly favourable to prolificness as to render it the acknowledged remedy for cases of sterility, which, it will not be denied, are the least frequent in such a condition of life. As numbers increase; plenty increases, and labour abates, in a yet greater proportion; till, in a plenary state of population, general ease and luxury are diffused. At every advancing stage of society the principle of prolificness still diminishes;

tained, when it is seen that the moment of such a diminution, effected by whatsoever means, is that when a law of nature is put into operation, whose tendency is to fill up the vacuum thus created, and with beings destined to be so long helpless and burdensome, and pronounced, by the theory I am opposing, utterly valueless to society? A law, thus evidently thwarting all the efforts human beings might make to relieve themselves from the evils which the principle of population is said to occasion, would operate as a principle of vigilant and unceasing malevolence, were the views, too frequently taken of population, true. They are otherwise.



and Nature, not by a beautiful fiction, but by a constantly-operating law of real benevolence, makes the principle of human multiplication the unfailing instrument in elevating the condition of mankind, and still so regulates its operation as to prevent its ever becoming otherwise. Knowing and contemplating the extent of her provision, she is thus making a perpetual and unwearied effort to raise her offspring to the utmost elevation of prosperity and happiness, and has so calculated her laws that they shall never surpass it. This view of the subject is further proved,

7. By showing, from the registers of this and other countries, that, directly contrary to what has been frequently put forth ; in the dearer years the marriages are the most prolific in conceptions, which singular fact is demonstrated by a variety of proofs and calculations. The foregoing conclusions, and many others connected with the argument, are further confirmed and demonstrated,

8. By an appeal to the registers of the peerage of the empire, a distinct class in which, as it is admitted, the preventive check does not exist. By a minute examination of these, not only are many of the preceding positions corroborated, but others, of an equally curious nature, are elicited. It is a first and favourite maxim with the theory now opposed, that mankind, contrary to what I have been maintaining, would, if unchecked,

“breed up to the level of their food.” This supposition, the particular class of society I am now referring to completely negatives. Taking the number of creations, during any given period, the seventeenth century, for example, and it is seen how few heirs male are now remaining, or even descendants. I have also taken the two preceding generations of this body, and recording every circumstance respecting them, connected with the subject under consideration, I have shown that the strong tendency of mankind in a high state of affluence and ease, is not to multiplication, in the “geometric ratio,” or in any ratio, but to diminution and extinction; notwithstanding the facts show, that the preventive check did not exist at all; that the period of marriage was, on the average, very early, and the health of the parties, as unequivocally manifested by their great longevity, unimpaired. A minute examination of the authentic documents, thus referred to, has not only confirmed many of the preceding statements, but developed other very interesting and important physiological facts, which have hitherto escaped general attention.

The preceding views of the subject have been confirmed,

Lastly, by the analogy of nature in the processes of animal and vegetable reproduction, especially the former. The heads of this branch of the argument are too numerous to be here recapitulated; I shall, therefore, con-

tent myself with merely stating, that they illustrate and confirm, in the minutest manner, every principle of increase advanced in the preceding pages.

Such are the outlines of the true principle of population, and the arguments by which it is established; the latter, as I conceive, embracing every species of proof of which the subject is susceptible. As to the calculations by which it is demonstrated, the minuteness and uniformity of their results are such as to have occasionally excited a suspicion of their reality: though the more the operations of nature are submitted to computations of this kind, the more exact and certain they will appear; that is, if they are grounded upon a sufficient number of instances, as she seems purposely to conceal her laws when contemplated in individual cases, however certain and exact their results on the general average of her operations. This hint is perfectly necessary to those who may wish either to confirm or confute any of the preceding positions by personal examinations. Dr. Dugald Stewart has a fine passage on this subject, to which I must refer the reader, and shall now merely mention that I have adduced several instances in proof of the arithmetic of nature, if I may so express myself, and amongst the rest the following. Nothing can be less certain than the proportion of the sexes in the offspring of different marriages individually contemplated, but nothing

more uniform than the results, though made up of such a multitude of discordant proportions. The reason of this law is obvious, and strictly appertaining to the subject: the institution of marriage is the only certain way of multiplying, or even continuing the species, and hence their numbers are proportioned in a manner which has exercised the powers of the ablest mathematicians in this and preceding ages. But still there is an observable difference in the proportions of the sexes in different countries, and this difference again conforms to a law of nature hitherto, as I believe, unobserved, and one of a singularly exact and curious nature. Calculating from the nubile period in both sexes; in the offspring of those marriages contracted at a corresponding period of life, the sexes will be about equal, but if otherwise, the number of that parent's sex shall prevail who has longest postponed that union, and prevail just to that degree so as to make up for the diminution which, agreeably to the law of mortality, will take place in that interval: that is, where the age of the man exceeds, the number of his male children shall exceed; where, in the rarer instances, the female shall be the oldest, the children of her sex shall, in like manner, be more numerous; this, it will be shown, as calculated on the entire number of instances, taken from the peerage; as well as by other proofs, is the certain and exact result.\* This law of nature, again is no whim-

\* This law, also, it will be proved, extends to the animal creation.

sical or unnecessary regulation, but one which guarantees that institution, by which, as already noticed, she alone contemplates to continue the species: otherwise the habitual postponement of marriage by one sex would (as Mr. Malthus has somewhat too hastily pronounced, when referring to a passage in Aristotle) consign a certain proportion of the other to necessary celibacy. Other proofs of these exact regulations in the laws of nature are instanced, but will not now be brought forwards; one only shall be added to the foregoing, in proof that she is not more exact in calculating than intent upon executing them.

Lord Bacon, I think, somewhere observes, that in those tribes of the animal creation, amongst which the measure of reproduction is, in some sort, voluntary, there is a kind of natural arithmetic which is observed, rendering it almost impossible to frustrate the designs of nature, however often you attempt it. What nature, in this instance, by a mysterious instinct, dictates to the birds, she accomplishes in regard to human beings, by laws which are placed beyond their voluntary control. It is a received principle amongst the most eminent physiologists, that the measure of female prolificness is, in all cases, determinate, (at least, such was the opinion of the greatest of them, Hunter,) and further, that the earliest period of adolescence is not the most favourable for its complete evolution; on the contrary, premature

marriages were decried by the ancient advocates of population, as having a contrary tendency, by endangering both the life of the mother and the offspring. But on a point so essential to the system of the day, and made, indeed, the foundation of most of its suggestions, much attention has been bestowed, and being one of those matters which may be decided by arithmetic, and when, therefore, the attempt to do so by mere reasonings becomes ridiculous, this question, likewise, is submitted to numerical demonstration. And from the collected registers of the peerage already referred to, and by a different appeal, involving a far greater number of facts, promiscuously recorded, for a different purpose, and as little liable to the suspicion of incorrectness as the former, it is found, that early marriages are not conducive to a larger increase of population than those contracted at riper years, but to the contrary. The annual prolificness is, in the former case, less, and the proportion of mortality in the offspring is greater—the opinion of antiquity on this subject being thus fully confirmed. One thing disclosed in this examination is very striking: the regularity of the laws of nature on this point also. Commencing with the earliest ages, and proceeding to the latest ones, at which marriage usually takes place; (confining the observations, of course, to the period of natural prolificness;) the later the age to which marriages have been postponed, the more ra-



pidly is the principle of prolificness evolved, the annual fecundity regularly augmenting till it rises to its utmost height, the mortality of the offspring diminishing in an inverse ratio ; so anxiously bent does Nature appear to accomplish those purposes which every petty intruder pronounces to be prejudicial, and feels himself meritoriously engaged while impeding and frustrating to the utmost of his power\*.

The calculations thus appealed to, do not exhibit mere "tendencies," subject to constant "oscillations," but establish the true theory of population upon a series of results, in every case as uniformly and regularly graduated, in conformity with the principle laid down, as though the facts upon which they are grounded had been fabricated for the purpose ; and forming a species of demonstration which is beyond

\* It is not a part of my design on this occasion to follow the system announced to its necessary deductions, and those which present themselves here are too obvious to render it necessary. Any general attempt to put off marriage beyond the period nature assigns for that connexion, were it successful, would thwart the designs of Providence, as plainly indicated by all the foregoing calculations ; but, as has been lastly intimated, it would defeat its own purpose. Without producing the intended effect, it would wound the morals of the community ; inflict irreparable injury on private happiness ; disturb the appointed order and succession of the generations, so essential in the social system to human interests and happiness ; and, in many instances, disrupt the most important connexions altogether, and that at a period when their preservation is the most important ; while the lower the rank in society, the heavier would fall the evils it would inflict : and it is confessedly the poor at whom the theory which recommends it, takes aim. The confusion and distress it would inevitably occasion in that immense class, are inexpressible. "Late marriages," says Franklin, "make early orphans ;" orphans, which, as the same system dictates, should be left destitute of all legal support. And this is political economy ! O rare Daniels !



the possibility of the doctrine of chances to construct. I now regret that even the present work does not include a few of these tables, which would have certainly been more striking as an *argumentum ad oculos*, than verbal assurances can be, however credited.

A dissertation on the balance of food and numbers throughout animated nature, is added to this part of the work; in answer to the axiom of Mr. Malthus, asserting that the latter have a universal tendency to excess\*. In this, it is believed, some views are taken, and facts brought forward, of an interesting nature, strongly confirmatory of the general principle contended for, and demonstrating the minute and unerring calculations into which nature has entered, in order to secure a purpose so essential to the happiness, as well as existence of all sentient beings: a purpose which, it is further proved by an appeal to the condition of such, is fully accomplished. The argument, however, is not very capable of abridgment, and embraces too many topics to be gone into at present.

The sixth and concluding Book of the treatise is devoted to the discussion of the necessary deductions from the principle developed and established in the preceding ones, and which, as the practical application of the whole, is not the least important part of the work. But I must forbear entering upon these like-

\* Malthus. Essay on Population, p. 2.

wise, as they would necessarily carry me into explanations of considerable length: suffice it to say that the principle of population for which I contend, reconciles the affections, duties, and interests of human beings, whether collectively or individually considered; and identifies the whole with the dictates of nature and the laws of God.

Such, then, is a sketch of the principle of population about to be submitted to the public, together with the numerous proofs and tables from which it is inducted. These, without being mere selections of particular cases—without being garbled or strained for the purpose, but taken fairly, promiscuously, and indeed, universally, from all the records of human existence accessible to the public, fully establish the results, which form themselves into the theory now developed; the necessary connexion of the several parts of which, and the obvious harmony of the whole, afford a distinct and pleasing proof that it is the system of nature and of truth. The moral arguments in its favour ought, however, with human beings to be the most irresistible; but with those who too much disregard such, the physical proofs on which it is founded will, it is hoped, be regarded as conclusive. The contrary theory, indeed, professes to ground its demonstrations on the exact sciences; but most fallaciously: for the geometric ratio of increase, for which it contends, is a mere abstract idea, and never had

nor ever will have, an existence in any of the operations of nature ; while that for which I contend conforms to laws which are in visible and perpetual operation. Without affecting a species of demonstration inapplicable to the subject,—the principle of the increase of human beings admits of a most striking mathematical illustration : compared with the provision made for them, it conforms to the law of the hyperbola in approaching its asymptote ; it will still approach, without reaching, much less surpassing that line, or, to use the current phrase, “level of food,” which nature has prescribed and provided. It is somewhat curious that the progression of population, in certain cases where it has been apparently the most unrestrained, has, when geometrically delineated, assumed precisely that form.

It is quite obvious that the two systems now before the public cannot exist as separate truths ; and equally so, that no middle theory can be formed of parts of both, now so much the practice. They are, in all respects, “contraries, at war,” and agree in no single point either as it respects principle, or consequences, present or future. The one maintains that the law of human increase, if not checked by a constant and unnatural restraint, would, notwithstanding “the universal prevalence of every known virtue in the greatest conceivable degree, plunge society into the most wretched and

desperate state of want\* and misery; the other demonstrates that, in connexion with the virtues which it calls into existence and perpetuates, it is so regulated as to elevate human beings to the utmost degree of prosperity. Equally opposite are they as to the means by which they respectively maintain the varying principle of human fecundity to be governed: the former asserting that it is by the perpetual operation of want and misery that the numbers of mankind are “kept down to the level of food;” the latter, that increasing plenty is the regulator. That their effects, therefore, on the feelings, the principles and the policy of mankind are directly adverse, not sophistry itself can dispute, nor will it, indeed, attempt to do so. The one teaches human beings to regard each other as rival for an insufficient share in the bounties of Providence; the other as copartners in an abundance, which overflows as they multiply, and by means of that multiplication. That, calculating on a principle of cruel selfishness, pronounces mankind to be redundant by thousands, and consequently as worth less than nothing;—this, sees in their growing numbers not the signs only, (that all confess,) nor yet the instruments, but, as the wisest and the best of mankind have ever done, the very elements

\* Malthus. Essay, &c p. 493.

of all prosperity. It is not in the nature of things, therefore, that either of these views can be otherwise than strongly influential on the mutual feelings and conduct of mankind ; hence in their practical consequences they are, if possible, still more opposed than in principle.

A law such as the one now propounded, which should multiply human beings rapidly where such increase is necessary and advantageous, keeping up their numbers so as to create and preserve in constant exercise that necessity to which all natural and intellectual superiority is to be traced ; and still so moderated as to limit their multiplication by their means of subsistence, and the full measure of their happiness ; effecting, therefore, all the good, without perpetrating any of the evils of the contrary system, none can deny would be a desirable regulation in the economy of nature. Its very desirableness, then, I contend, is no mean argument in favour of its truth : strange indeed would it be were there a principle in creation in which human beings could suggest a plain improvement. We are, therefore, strongly warranted in expecting the existence of such a law. Some of the happiest efforts of moral philosophy, in modern times, have been those which have demonstrated the existence and exemplified the wisdom of the Deity, especially in the structure and functions of animated existences, by showing that similar purposes have been effectuated by corresponding contrivances

in what are called mechanical inventions \*. Now, in many of our complicated machines, particularly in the national one, for such, perhaps, the steam-engine may be denominated, there is that which, though moved by the same impetus, so acts as to retard or accelerate the velocity and equalize the movements of the whole: the significant name of this is "the governor." The law of population for which I contend, is simply this principle, or, if you please, contrivance, transferred, for a similar but infinitely more important purpose, to the social machine: where reason would feel it difficult to believe it could be wanting, and where experience has happily proved, in all ages and countries of the world, that it actually exists.

The desirableness of such a principle, however, I have never heard disputed—its existence, at least, when the proofs were not advanced, constantly; and simply because it did not seem easy to render a philosophical reason for that which is undoubtedly a physical fact. This is mentioned to guard the reader against a similar delusion. How, it may be asked, should this law be otherwise than obscure in the mode of its operation, when everything connected with the subject is enveloped in impenetrable mystery? No great stickler for miracles, Rousseau, has observed

\* See Paley's *Natural Theology*, *passim*.



that, "in the generation of animated and organized bodies, the human mind is lost as in an abyss." Reproduction, through all the innumerable tribes of animal and even vegetable existence, is, in all its forms, and in every single instance, a miracle to which nothing but the continuous evidence of our senses could reconcile our belief: one, indeed, which learning and imagination and experience have long attempted to penetrate and expound, but which, after all their labours, the most recondite professor understands as imperfectly as the untutored peasant: a subject which, the more it is considered in itself, or in relation to its infinitely numerous dependencies and ramifications, the less comprehensible it becomes. But of all the phenomena it involves, the principle for which I contend is, perhaps, the least obscure. It is the system which I am opposing, indeed, clear as it stands from all pretension to original discovery, and totally unembarrassed by any physical facts, or abstruse calculations, which implies, if duly considered, far the greater miracle; a miracle of malignity in the book of Nature and of Providence. It implies a solitary error in the computations of nature, or, more properly speaking, of its great Author, of the most important kind, to rectify which it represents Him as delivering His animated works, and especially man, to the regulation of the Manichean principle, for which it so strenuously contends, ridiculing the idea of His



interference in their behalf \*, when it is hardly consistent with a belief in His existence, to suppose that He would not interfere. The true theory, on the other hand, merely subscribes to the ancient axiom, *natura non abundat, nec deficit* : or, to express the same truth in more sacred, as well as more intelligible terms, that “God hath ordered all things in number, in measure, and in weight.” In a word, it recognises the wisdom and benevolence of the Deity, asserting his care of his creatures, either in his immediate and constantly-presiding presence and providence, or what, perhaps, not less highly exalts our ideas of his infinite perfections—in that unerring prescience which, joined to his power and goodness, has anticipated from everlasting all the contingencies of our existence, and by an uninterrupted series of secondary causes, which runs through all time and connects itself with eternity, has adequately provided for them : grasping, as the prince of Poets represents the universal Father, in his Almighty hand that golden chain, bright with benevolence and mercy, by which He sustains, from the heights of eternity, His universal offspring. It is thus it “betakes itself to miracles †.”

But if we must abstain from these sacred appeals to providence and to God, and refer simply to what some would call natural causes,

\* Malthus, *Essay on Population*, pp. 272. 373.

† *Ibid.*

(though the greatest philosopher the world has ever yet beheld, and in his greatest work, has pronounced the term, when strictly applied, unintelligible,) still I maintain that the real principle of population, regulated as explained, is strictly analogous to, and, indeed, a part of a law which appears to pervade and govern the universe. Whether we contemplate nature in those orbs which are perpetually iterating their ancient courses around us, or in those mighty conformations or minuter parts in which matter is presented to our closer examination; or pursue our inquiries into the vegetable and animal kingdoms, we find all its several parts strictly relative, and reciprocally dependent upon and influencing each other, forming, therefore, a connected whole; involving a series of calculations and proportions, as exact as they are immense, of which magnitude, motion, number, space, and time itself, are essential ingredients; thus connecting creation, from its ubiquital centre to its boundless circumference, in one unbroken and everlasting chain, and preserving, in all its vast and complicated movements, the eternal equipoise of the universe. Of this law the sublime discoveries of Newton form but a part, and to this it is humbly conceived the principle which governs the number of human beings may be as plainly referred. I mean what, perhaps, may be, for the present, expressed by the term—the Law of Relation. The more nature is contemplated in this point

of view, the clearer, it is conceived, will her operations appear, till it will be found that there is nothing isolated or independent in the universe but its eternal Author; and least of all man. Seeing, then, how exactly he is adapted to the station he holds, and the condition in which he is placed in nature, it would be monstrous, indeed, to suppose that, last of all, his numbers should be disproportionate to the space he is appointed to occupy and the sustentation provided for him. But in pursuing the thoughts that thus suggest themselves on the subject, I am wandering far from the purpose of the present publication, to which I shall now return.

It has been already remarked that, on applying the law of population, as explained, to the test of past history in different nations of the world, or to their present condition, its truth appeared abundantly confirmed. There remained one country, however, and that, unhappily, a portion of the British Empire, which, before examination, I had concluded would constitute an exception, though such an exception as would confirm, rather than confront, the general rule; I mean Ireland. That country, deprived as it long had been of its capital, and degraded and impoverished by absenteeism and emigration, was plainly placed in an unnatural state; and would, according to the preceding view of the subject, continue rapidly to increase, without that increase being accompanied, as in other cases, by corresponding advantages. But, on

examination, I found that even Ireland still conformed to the general law, in precisely the same manner as all other countries, though, perhaps, not to an equal degree; that those districts which were the least peopled were the most prolific; and that the most densely inhabited parts, notwithstanding the comparative sterility of their soil, were invariably the most prosperous ones. The historical part of the inquiry was likewise equally conclusive, and added another proof to the uniform body of evidence previously collected on the same subject. The most exact analogy was, therefore, established; authorising me to apply the whole theory of population, thus confirmed in all its essential particulars, to Ireland. But even the statistics of that country alone, establishing the true and immutable law of increase, afford abundant proof that the expedients meditated in regard to its inhabitants are as opposed to the principles of nature, as they are to those of patriotism and sound policy; and that, as certainly as they are attempted, they will be frustrated. It, perhaps, may be thought to minister to the ends of individual selfishness to "clear estates," "tax," or demolish "cottages," "drive" hamlets, and expose helpless multitudes to direct starvation, though this, if duly considered, is extremely doubtful: but let not the actors in such disgraceful scenes any longer claim the merit of patriotism for their deeds; at least let the nation forbear to act upon the

exterminating hypothesis, that getting rid of a thousand labourers here and there would be “a gain certainly;” or contemplate the deportation of tens and hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants, upon the principle of making vacuums, to use the absurd phrase of the day. Those vacuums nature abhors, and will take good heed hastily to replenish. The fact has been long noticed; the cause, it is believed, is now developed; and is perfectly distinct from the common supposition of their occasioning an increased number of marriages. Those who may be inclined to dispute this point, are forewarned that they will have to maintain their argument against a few of the first rules of arithmetic. Nor is it less important, or less obviously true, on examination, that to diminish the number of people would be to deteriorate the condition of the remainder. As a false and contrary principle of population, however, is being acted upon, inflicting great individual misery wherever it obtains; and as it seems to be in immediate contemplation to carry it into effect to a still larger extent,—I have been induced to put forth the following pages somewhat prematurely; and, perhaps, in reference to the general argument I have undertaken, which is of a more important character, and will occupy a far larger work, somewhat injudiciously: for although Ireland itself fully proves the principle for which I contend, yet as it furnishes the fewest statistical facts by which

to substantiate it, of any country to which I have appealed, it certainly forms the least striking part of that series of demonstrations which will be shortly submitted to the public. If, however, the principle unfolded be true, no personal considerations could have justified me in withholding it from the public at the present crisis, so momentous in reference to it. I have acted upon that consideration; and in now reviewing what I have produced, I fear much has been omitted very pertinent to the subject, and still more retained that is, perhaps, superfluous to it. If the latter comprise any thing that can be construed personally, I shall still more deeply regret the haste and inadvertency with which I have written. Not so, however, as it regards any arguments or expressions, however strong, aimed against the system I have opposed throughout; that would be to affect a candour very inconsistent with sincerity and truth, and one which, as applied to the subject, would be a very dubious virtue. Feeling, as I do, that it is equally opposed to the honour of God, and the interests of mankind; and is, from first to last, as cruel as it is fallacious, I have expressed myself in corresponding language; and, in so doing, if any justification seem necessary, I will present it in the words of Bacon. “Sharp and bitter writing,” says he, “is not hastily to be condemned;—for men cannot contend coldly, and without affection, about things which they hold dear and precious.”



Having now, as I intended, developed the true principle of population, and the nature of the proofs by which it is supported, it is due to the theory to state some of the difficulties it will, doubtless, have to encounter, which may cause it to be disputed or neglected for a time, but which I feel confident, (founded as it is upon indisputable facts,) will only postpone, without being able to prevent, its ultimate prevalence.

And, first ; the contrary system which it has to displace before it can obtain attention, forbidding as it seems to be, has many points of attraction to those who espouse it, and has undoubtedly spread very widely and taken deep root. The modern and fallacious principle of population appeals to the strongest, though certainly not the most amiable passions of the human heart ; it consults the fears and soothes the selfishness of those to whom it addresses itself ; it graduates the virtues and charities of social life, and even changes their nature, as expediency or interest dictates : it absolves, in great measure, wealth and power from their deep and anxious responsibilities ; excusing the sloth and negligence, if not even sanctioning the misrule of those whose elevated duty it is to mitigate or remove human miseries, by attributing those miseries to the laws of nature and of God \*. Moreover, it is so propounded as to avail itself of the weaknesses of the *intellect*, as well as those of the heart. It

\*Malthus, Essay on Pop., p. 367.



is announced as an abstract truth, with which, one of the greatest of mankind says, "the mind of man, to the extreme prejudice of knowledge, so much delighteth;" in "barren generalities," which, as an authority hardly less than Bacon, warns us, "ought never to be trusted\*." While the very terms in which it is announced,—geometry and arithmetic, to the use of which mankind have been accustomed to associate ideas of certainty and precision; together with the confidence with which it is asserted and repeated, have contributed to disarm suspicion, and to induce the mind, without the fatigue of examination, to surrender itself to a settled conviction of its truth. These, and many other reasons, have concurred to spread a doctrine which has been always more or less acceptable to a portion of mankind. At present, therefore, it is received and regarded in the light of a settled axiom. Modern philosophers embrace it on pain of forfeiting their title to their very name; periodical writers almost unanimously espouse it, and unceasingly spread its dogmas through every part of the earth; legislators seem on the very point of reducing the system into practice; and even many of the expounders of our religion, though they cannot pollute the well-head of revelation with its principle, yet are busily engaged in tinging the stream with its pernicious admixture. That

\* Hooker. Even Rousseau saw that "general and abstract ideas have been the source of the greatest errors" into which mankind have fallen.

the notion once imbibed should be tenaciously retained, is natural. Philosophy, as it is well known, has not merely its fashions, which, like those of manners, are deemed indispensable, however absurd, but it has its prejudices, which the history of every age can testify are, at least, as strong as those of ignorance. That it has its pride, was never doubted; and a change of opinion, especially on so plain a point, would be deemed a subscription to its own degradation. The stronger, therefore, the reasons which are advanced against it, the more determined will be their adherence to it. Some of this class, indeed, have been heard to declare that they would as soon resign their belief in the first propositions of Euclid, as in those of Malthus; asserting, as one of them has done publicly, that the system is at least as certain as the rotation of the earth on its own axis.

But the most powerful support this doctrine receives is from the modern system of political economy, of which it is an acknowledged basis. On this subject I wish to say a few words, in explanation, having made as free with that system as it does with all others. I mean not, by this modern "science," that true national policy, which has long pursued the real interests of the country under the guidance of common sense, experience, and humanity; and whose course has been pointed out by the finger of Providence. Seeing that nature has equally bestowed upon all nations the necessities of

existence, and unequally distributed her superfluities and luxuries, it shapes its course accordingly. In the first place, affording due encouragement to internal industry, with a view to secure the labour and the lives of the people, it places its foreign intercourse upon its natural and permanent footing, and enters into a system of liberal interchange with the surrounding nations, not with the fears of the miser, or the feelings of the gambler, but with a view to the mutual and perpetual advantages of each. Never trampling on those interests which may stand in its path, till they can be safely and advantageously transplanted, it pursues that steady course which has conducted this country from its once degraded condition to that high and palmy state of prosperity which it has long enjoyed. Though attending to the interests of the community, it has never yet recognised Plutus as the one divinity, nor Political Economy as the sole prophetess of the nation; nor filled the temple of legislation with “the tables of the money-changers;” nor made mere jobbers and speculators its oracles. It has carefully attended to commerce without having been dictated to by it; knowing that there are “other things than are dreamt of in its philosophy,” namely, the health, happiness, morals, and well-being of the mass of the community, without securing which, even riches would make to themselves wings and fly away. Its maxims have tended to harmonise the various interests

of the community, and to secure their advantages severally, not by sacrificing them to each other, but by promoting the prosperity of the whole. These are the principles which have conducted this nation by a gradual, and slow, indeed, but solid advancement, to its present state, and seem to have in them the elements of perpetuity. Nor has the period through which they have prevailed been that of mercenary improvement merely, it has been one of high intellectual advancement; it has been illustrated by genius, and ennobled by valour, “beyond all Greek, beyond all Roman fame.” Such, then, is *not* the policy I allude to in my remarks on political economy. But it is that system which has lately sprung up amongst us; a thing made up of “shreds and patches;” partly of truisms, partly of palpable blunders, but principally of a string of unconnected paradoxes, which may be either, and which is self-elevated into the rank of a “science,” in which, such is the temptation, every one is at once a professor, and, under a sort of immediate afflatus, utters oracles. It is to these fancied revelations, and not to those plain and universally acknowledged principles that may be still retained, that I allude, and which I have identified with the modern system\*. Though all of them agree

\* The pretensions of modern political economy as a “Science,” may be well explained in the language of Blumenbach, applied to another modern science of a very similar character. When that celebrated Professor was asked what was his opinion on Craniology, he thus expressed himself:—*Es ist viel darin was wahr ist, und*

that the short and direct path of human interest has, from the creation downward, never been discovered, much less trodden, till their days,—still no two of them concur as to its exact direction; on one point, however, they are unanimous, namely, in asserting the doctrine now opposed, the superfecundity of the human race, and, consequently, the necessity of checking their increase. It is in their capacity as zealots for this notion that it becomes necessary, in my present argument, to allude to them, or rather their opinions; and to contrast their views upon population with the ancient and authentic principle. It was the object of that true national economy which they despise and would fain displace, to raise the value and multiply the numbers of our countrymen; to spread the greatest possible degree of happiness amongst the utmost possible number; objects of identical, instead of incompatible pursuit, their notions to the contrary notwithstanding. But it is the purpose of the new school to regard and treat men as mere animated machines, and, indeed, to supplant them by inanimate ones, were it possible; to pronounce them as worthless, or otherwise, just as it may please the great capitalists (whom it is enabling to absorb, as fast as possible, the middle ranks of society)

*viel was neu; aber Das was wahr ist, ist nicht neu, und Das was neu ist, ist nicht wahr.* (There is much in it that is true, and much that is new; but that which is true is not new, and that which is new is not true.)

to determine regarding them, instructing such meanwhile, that they are under no imaginable obligation, but what selfishness dictates, to prefer the labour of those by whom themselves have been raised and are supported; and that wealth ought not to be called upon to relieve that starving poverty, by whose former exertions it was created. Nay, so far has the mercenary doctrine of this school advanced, as to pronounce that the virtues themselves are marketable commodities\*. The perfection of this system, therefore, is the abjection of the species. But the question with which I have mainly to do is not one that is to be decided by capital, the golden image now set up, the omnipotent of the present system; it lies between the Creator and his creatures, and is simply this, whether his Providence is, and will continue, equal to the supply of their wants. This is the precise question; meantime, it is somewhat strange that the economists can reconcile the conclusion, at which they seem unanimously to arrive, with some of their own notions. They have written largely on the subject of Capital, and on its definition; and yet they seem to forget that whatever it may be called, or however defined, it is that and that only which gives its possessor a command of the product of human labour; consequently human beings constitute the wealth,—the capital of the world: it is

\* Malthus, *Essay on Pop.*, p. 64.



they only who create it ; and they alone who give it its value when created. They have said much, too, about the market of labour, as it is called, and yet seem not to know, or at all events frequently to forget, that mankind are reciprocally producers and consumers, and that, under proper regulations, they are necessary to each other whatever be their numbers ; that mutual wants are so balanced and connected in the mechanism of the social system, of which necessity is the main-spring, as to produce that perpetual motion which nothing but the “feathers” of these philosophers can disturb or destroy. This mutual dependence of man upon his fellow man, whatever be the attempts to weaken it, and however successful they may be for a time, will certainly be found as strong in the last, as it was in the first stages of human existence, nay far stronger, for reasons which are elsewhere pointed out. As the body politic enlarges, all its members partake of the general growth : when, therefore, it has attained to its gigantic stature, still less than when it was in its infant state, can the hand say to the foot, “I have no need of thee.” But the idea that mankind should outgrow their dependence upon each other, whimsical as it seems, is far more tolerable than that they should become too numerous for the provision of their common parent. Yet this last is the notion that political economy, and the modern principle of population, share in common, found-



ing upon it a system of policy as adverse to the feelings and interests of the human race as it is to the honour of the Deity.

Such are the numerous and powerful obstacles which will, for a time, successfully oppose the progress of the true principle of population, to which must be added others interposed by the manner in which I have discussed the subject, and more especially the deductions I have drawn from it ; to the latter, as voluntarily encountered, a few words are due. Seeing, on a review of the system propounded, that it was clearly the intention of Providence to furnish the necessary means of subsistence to every country within itself, (otherwise the argument, as it respects the whole, would at length inevitably fall to the ground,) I concluded that the intention of the Creator and the duty and interests of his creatures were identical ; and have therefore connected my theory with a defence of internal cultivation. To this view of the subject, however, many of the commercial class, to say nothing of the political economists, are, as I think, unwisely opposed ; their objections therefore are excited. This course, however, it might be supposed, would conciliate the opinions of the agriculturists ; but the sentiments expressed as to the real interest and duty of that class as a body, equally dictated by the same theory, will excite at least equal opposition. The self-same principle, political economy, which so unhappily prevails in other ranks

of society, has long infested this ; the principle, however disguised, of mercenary monopoly, which, resolving everything into a question of momentary selfishness, is setting every interest amongst us at variance, and is rapidly swallowing up that middle rank of the community in which has long resided the moral strength of the British community. The advice of the celebrated Hobbes on an enlarging population, is, as to its wisdom and humanity, as authoritative as if it had been pronounced by an oracle ; it has certainly the inspiration of common sense, “ Live closer, and cultivate better ”—but, strange to say, the sinister policy recommended by our great agricultural authorities in these circumstances is to diminish the number of the cultivators, and to enlarge, or as Lord Bacon has it, to engross farms. I am perfectly aware that it is useless to argue with those who imagine they have a personal interest in the question ; but should these pages meet the notice of any of the greater landed proprietors of the empire, whose object, I am persuaded, it has always been to promote the interest and happiness of all their dependents, however they may have, in this instance, mistaken the means, I earnestly solicit their attention to what is urged in behalf of the more natural, humane, and, as I contend, the more profitable course.

To this enumeration of the strong objections to the propositions with which the system is

connected, I will only add its defence of the poor laws, against which a general outcry is attempted to be raised, and the proposal that their principle should be extended to Ireland. I shall not mention the hostility of absenteeism and all its train of apologists and dependents, powerful in wealth and numbers, and now fully armed in the panoply of political economy. Its enmity has had to be encountered by all who have attended to the evils which the population of that country had long suffered, or suggested those remedies which alone have the least prospect of finally removing them.

But notwithstanding these and many other powerful obstacles against the system of population advanced in these pages, obtaining present acceptance ; grounded as it is upon the experience of mankind in all ages, and demonstrated by a series of calculations founded on authentic data, as well as dictated by the feelings and constitution of human nature, I feel a confidence not unbecoming the argument, that it will, however neglected or assailed, ultimately and universally prevail. There are many who have reluctantly received and retained the contrary opinion solely from a conviction of its truth, by whom the real principle of human increase will be felt as a liberation from a theory anything rather than consoling to a benevolent mind ; and still more who, in spite of apparent demonstrations to

the contrary, have retained their entire confidence in the doctrines of divine revelation and the sufficiency of nature, to whom it will afford a sacred triumph; such, it is believed, will regard the true principle of human increase as unfolding an essential link in the chain of a wise and ever-watchful Providence, and heightening the pleasing confidence with which they repose on its eternal dispensations. "It is Heaven upon Earth," says Bacon, "for a man's mind to rest in Providence, move in charity, and turn upon the poles of truth."

This principle, and the proofs on which it is founded, have been rather widely submitted, and never, in any instance, however strongly the contrary theory may have been previously fixed in the mind, have they failed to produce full conviction. I have, therefore, only one other reason to add to those already mentioned, as having induced me to publish a part only of my work in the first instance, giving in that part an outline of the entire theory; and this being of a nature purely personal, ought, perhaps, to have been omitted. I was not without sufficient reasons for believing that the system was about being presented to the public surreptitiously; and I confess, having had, as far as I know, no precursor in the view here taken of the true principle of Population, and no assistance in the long and laborious research which its demonstration

involves, I felt not unwilling to endure whatever odium or otherwise might attend the enunciation and proof of a regulated ratio of prolificness as governing the multiplication of mankind, and constituting the principle of human increase a law of unerring and perpetual benevolence.

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## I R E L A N D.

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§ I. (1.) THAT division of the British empire which forms the subject of the following pages, has been occasionally thought irreconcilable with the principle of population as previously laid down, even by those who have fully admitted the proofs on which it rests in relation to all other countries. On the other hand, it presents facts equally adverse to many of the positions usually maintained: in every point of view, it seems an anomaly in the history and progress of civilized society. It presents a country, supereminently endowed with all those natural advantages which have elevated, in their turn, every people who have possessed them, gradually sinking in the scale of nations; and exhibiting the astounding spectacle of a population rapidly increasing in numbers, without, as in all other cases, manifesting any corresponding improvement either in its character or condition.

(2.) Many there are, at the present time, who imagine they have obtained a clue to the difficulties which environ this dark and mysterious subject, namely, the modern theory of population; which, alas! is never a mere abstract or inert principle, and least of all in the present instance. It not only soothes the negli-

gence of those who ought to succour Ireland, and paralyzes the efforts of those who would, by attributing her sufferings to the laws of nature and of God, but, sanctioned by its twin "science," political economy, strenuously proposes palliatives which would fall upon the people as the deadliest punishments. Two dogmas they have in common, as to the causes of the suffering and degradation of that country, and, at present, one specific cure. The former are these: 1. The distresses of Ireland are owing to a superfluous population, still increasing faster than the means of subsistence. 2. Those distresses are aggravated and multiplied by the universal use of the potatoe<sup>1</sup>. The remedy is to be found in a diminished population. With regard to the former, it is singular enough that, in one and the same breath, Providence is arraigned for bringing too many human beings into existence, and for affording sure means of sustentation to their increasing numbers by a stupendous provision of nature, hitherto almost untouched rather than exhausted, and probably, in reference to any future population of the earth, inexhaustible<sup>2</sup>. As it respects

<sup>1</sup> What Mr. Malthus calls the "Potatoe System." (Essay, p. 576, note.)—Curwen, "Observations on the State of Ireland," vol. ii. p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Let it not be imagined, from this remark, that I am an advocate for confining the population of Ireland (as it almost is at present) to the use of this root, much less for submitting all other countries to a similar restriction. What I mean will be best gathered from such facts as the following: "Mr. Stepney last year had two acres and a half of potatoes, which fattened four bullocks, maintained eighteen pigs, produced seed for four acres this year, and supplied his own family, consisting of twenty persons."—(Wakefield's Account of Ireland, vol. i. p. 450.) Mr. Curwen says, "One acre of potatoes would feed at least ten persons the year round."—(Observations on the State of Ireland, vol. ii. p. 122.) According to Arthur Young's estimate, Ireland



Ireland, millions upon millions of acres, now totally waste and idle, a little industry, directed and aided by what is called capital, would enrich with this subterraneous harvest, and at the same time clothe with cattle “a thousand” of her barren “hills,” so as to sustain and satisfy many millions of human beings more than are now often almost starved (ten times as many is the lowest calculation of our ablest agricultural authorities<sup>1</sup>); but this natural expedient, equally dictated by humanity, policy, and necessity, does not chime in with the current notions. It is deemed more desirable to dissipate British capital in expatriating British subjects; in planting dubious friends, if not

would sustain, by the aid of this plant, about one hundred millions of inhabitants.—(Young’s *Tour through Ireland*, vol. ii. part 2, p. 24.) As to the peculiar adaptation of this root to the universal sustentation of all those animals (including poultry) on which man subsists or depends, see every agricultural work of note which has been published within a century past, especially the entire works of the latter writer; also Radcliffe’s “*Agricultural Survey of the Netherlands*,” &c. The plenty, health, and happiness it confers on mankind, are the theme of exultation with Young, even when he is speaking of Ireland, where it is almost exclusively used. In calculating the number of human beings that might be sustained by the extended culture of this inestimable root, allowing them, together with it, as large a portion of animal food as would gratify appetite consistently with health, the anticipations of the most sanguine friends of population, however extravagant they may have been deemed, are infinitely exceeded: all this fully accounts for the well-grounded and instinctive hatred which our anti-populationists bear to this nutritious and palatable food. On these calculations, however important to political arithmetic, I shall not enter; my immediate purpose being merely to deliver this stupendous and inexhaustible gift of Providence, bestowed on Europe at the precise period when it became needful, from the insulting neglects of our political economists, or their still more degrading notice, in barely allowing it a place at the sideboard, and forming, perhaps, when nicely boiled or delicately scalloped, a pleasing accession to the “science” of gastronomy.

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Curwen, *Observations on the State of Ireland*, vol. ii. pp. 32. 122.

future enemies, in distant quarters; peopling the northern deserts of America, or the arid regions of Southern Africa, or even the continent and remote islands of the Southern Ocean, and thus, in a vast plurality of cases, terminating human misery, instead of relieving it. Such is the policy which is now beginning to be recommended from high places, even as it regards England: the very “thews and sinews” of the empire are to be transferred to distant climes, in order to increase our internal prosperity and strength! Regarding the latter, they may, indeed, differ a little at present; but, touching Ireland, the greatest unanimity prevails: Ireland must be depopulated to be enriched.

(3.) Notwithstanding this ominous union of opinion amongst our economists, there are happily certain obstacles which oppose the fulfilment of their views; such as the common sense and humane feelings of the British people; and these are rendered insuperable (thanks, this once, to our poverty,) by our total inability to carry such antinational schemes into execution. Still, however, a mere theoretical adherence to such notions is in the highest degree mischievous, because it occupies the place of those enlightened and liberal views which would dictate a better policy, and stands in the way of those patriotic exertions which might, and, in this age, assuredly would, ameliorate the condition of that unhappy country, and which, by developing its manifold resources, would scatter blessings over an improving and a prosperous people. But before I proceed to examine and expose the pernicious errors of the

modern theory in reference to Ireland, and attempt, in turn, to point out what I conceive to be its “bane and antidote,” I will here insert a table, exhibiting its population at the different periods specified, when attempts were made to ascertain it. We are not to infer that these numbers (with the exception, however, of the last, which are the result of actual enumeration) are correct; a variety of circumstances, existing in most countries, and some important ones peculiar to Ireland, prevent us from so supposing. We may, however, reasonably conclude, that the inaccuracy lies on the side of deficiency throughout, and especially in the remoter periods.

*Synoptical View of the Estimated Population of Ireland.*

Date.	How ascertained.	Number of Souls.
1672	Sir William Petty . . . . .	1,100,000
—	The same corrected . . . . .	1,320,000
1695	Captain South . . . . .	1,034,102
1712	Thomas Dobbs, Esq. . . . .	2,099,094
1718	The same . . . . .	2,169,048
1725	The same . . . . .	2,317,374
1726	The same . . . . .	2,309,106
1731	Established Clergy . . . . .	2,010,221
1754	Hearth-money Collectors . . . . .	2,372,634
1767	The same . . . . .	2,544,276
1777	The same . . . . .	2,690,556
1785	The same . . . . .	2,845,932
1788	Gervais Parker Bushe, Esq. . . . .	4,040,000
1791	Hearth-money Collectors . . . . .	4,206,612
1792	The Rev. Dr. Beaufort . . . . .	4,088,226
1805	Thomas Newenham, Esq. . . . .	5,395,456
1814	Incomplete census of 1812 . . . . .	5,937,856
1821	Census 55 Geo. III. c. 120. . . . .	6,801,827

By this table, the population of Ireland appears to have doubled about once in every sixty-five years, a great rate of increase, if the emigration which has taken place from thence, for at least a century past, and which was relatively far the largest in the former part of that period, is taken into the account; for I

totally differ with those who pronounce emigration, under such, or indeed any circumstances, to be “immaterial” in its effects upon the progress of population. To this drain must be added those losses, whether arising from intestine tumults and rebellions, or frequent and fatal epidemics, which, during a far more extended period, have been almost peculiar to Ireland. The increase, though thus checked and impeded, is doubtless very large, and is in strict accordance with the principle of population for which I contend ; it conforms to the facts, and is confirmed by the physiology upon which that principle is founded : while the wretchedness with which, in this exempt case, these enlarging numbers are still accompanied, instead of confronting the true theory of human increase, is precisely that sort of exception which establishes its truth.

§ II. (1.) But, before I prove this, I shall, in the first place, examine the arguments of those who, holding the modern notion on the principle of population, attribute the distress and degradation of Ireland to excessive numbers ; and who exultingly point to that country, as fully demonstrating all the dogmas they have advanced. A very short consideration of the subject will, I think, suffice to abate the confidence of such, if not finally to destroy it altogether.

These, then, I would first ask, is Ireland over-peopled in reference to its potential produce ?

On the contrary, even on the showing of the Emigration Committee, there are in Ireland, at the present time, at least 4,900,000 acres of productive land un-

cultivated, independently of 2,416,664 acres deemed (on what authority I know not) incapable of improvement<sup>1</sup>. These immense tracts, a little of the constantly abstracted capital of the country might, and would, bring into the most luxuriant state, as their cultivation should become necessary; while the very act of reclaiming these would be the means of correcting the management of the rest, now imperfectly improved, so as to produce the means of human subsistence in quantities it would not be easy to calculate, certainly far beyond the possible consumption of double the present inhabitants of the entire island, (to take a far lower estimate than any which agriculture presents to us,) even were the people as much improved in their mode of living as they would be increased in numbers. In the mean time, while Nature has provided the amplest means for this amelioration, and solicits from us their improvement, is she, or “human institutions<sup>2</sup>,” chargeable with the misery which their neglect occasions? Is the principle of our policy, or that of population, to blame as it respects Ireland? In a word, are these sufferings, under such circumstances, chargeable upon man or upon God?

(2.) But, to disencumber the question of all those calculations which a reference to the potential produce of the country involves, and of which political economy would avail itself, in order to “darken counsel” by obscure definitions and abstract discussions, neither intelligible nor interesting to the mass of mankind;

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of evidence before the Emigration Committee, Third Report, p. 361.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Malthus would say, the laws of nature.—Essay, p. 367.

let us, secondly, ask the advocates of the new theory of population, who, as before noticed, imagine they prove their point by a reference to Ireland, is Ireland, leaving totally out of consideration its possible fertility, overpeopled in reference to its actual produce?

This, again, I must answer as before. Most certainly not; but very much to the contrary: and to this answer, and its necessary consequences, I must call the serious attention of the advocates of absenteeism, to whom I shall address myself more particularly hereafter. Ireland, instead of not producing sufficient for the sustenance of its inhabitants, produces far more than they ever consume, exporting a greater quantity of its edible products than probably any other country of equal extent in the whole world. I had collected the annual returns of its exports of this nature for a series of years past, when, at the moment I was inserting them, a condensed statement of them, at a period particularly calculated to put the question to the severest test, met my eye. It is contained in a useful little work, entitled “Statistical Illustrations,” in the emphatic language of whose author I shall present it. “With an ignorance and pertinacity presumptuous as the expatiations and assertions adverted to above are fallacious and delusive” (alluding to some previous remarks on absenteeism), “it is asserted that the misery of Ireland arises from an excess of population beyond the power of the country to supply subsistence; but, in the face of such assertion, and whilst an appeal was being made in England to rescue Ireland from famine, and a subscription of £304,181, in 1822, was raised on



that plea, £30,882 only of which was expended for articles of subsistence, and £9,374 more in potatoes for seed ; the remainder being distributed in money," (much of which doubtless found its way into the pockets of the absentee landlords,) "Ireland exported articles of subsistence, alone, to no less an amount (at the very reduced value of that year) than £4,518,832; and, in the three years, 1821, 1822, and 1823, to the enormous amount of upwards of sixteen millions; whilst nearly the whole of the remaining exports, to the amount of upwards of ten millions more, in those three years, were composed of the products of the Irish soil<sup>1</sup>." Whether the immense quantity of cured provisions which Ireland supplies, in her own ports, to the royal navy, as well as the merchant shipping of this vast maritime empire, has to be added to these enormous amounts, I have not ascertained, nor is it necessary; the argument is abundantly triumphant either way.

In the face, then, of such facts as these, the hardihood of attributing the misery of Ireland to a population redundant and excessive, in reference to the means of subsistence there produced, and of the appeal constantly made to that country in proof of the principle of population, as now explained, is certainly without parallel.

No further proofs seem necessary upon a point absolutely incontrovertible; I therefore conclude, that if Ireland, at the present moment, only partially and imperfectly cultivated, far more than sustains its inhabitants, the appeal to that country in proof of the evil

<sup>1</sup> Statistical Illustrations, p. 60.



principle of population, which multiplies mankind faster than, and beyond, the means of their subsistence, is at once disposed of, especially with those who regard human institutions so light in the scale by which the individual shares are apportioned and distributed.

But, on so important a topic, practically speaking, as the population of Ireland, on which a fallacious principle, dictating a policy equally cruel and absurd, affects the welfare of millions of human beings, and even the existence of multitudes, a little prolixity stands in need of no excuse. I shall therefore attempt to demolish the very remains of an argument, which, I think, has been already completely shaken. And this I shall do by shortly considering the proofs by which it pretends to be supported; each of which a very little attention will disengage from the cause they are advanced to support, converting them, like all faithless auxiliaries, into its most formidable enemies.

§ III. (1.) As far as I have been able to gather the opinions of those who speak the most confidently as to an excessive population in Ireland, and are the loudest in demanding repressive measures in reference to it, they advance, in favour of their supposition, the following reasons :

1. The wretchedness and degradation of the people.
2. Their want of employment.
3. The frequent return of scarcities.
4. The prevalence of epidemics.

These symptoms, indeed, we are instructed to believe, constitute every where the leading ones in the

diagnosis of the inveterate, hereditary disease of the human family, a plethora of numbers; and clearly indicate the treatment required<sup>1</sup>.

But what will become of these proofs, or rather of the argument, they are meant to support, when it is seen that they existed to at least an equal degree, when, according to every possible view of the subject, Ireland suffered from a contrary extreme, namely, from a paucity of people? In showing that such was the case, a vast body of evidence is at hand, sufficient, indeed, to swell this inquiry into ten times its present size. I shall, however, limit myself to one or two authorities on each point, and refer those who may be dissatisfied with them, to the entire history of that country, which is, unhappily, almost exclusively made up of them.

Commencing with the first period of the preceding table, viz. 1672, when the population was calculated at little above a million, or, as since corrected, amounting to about 1,320,000; none, I think, will care to assert that Ireland was then, at any rate, overpeopled, either in reference to its fertility or the population of surrounding nations. With a soil of surpassing fertility, and only about forty individuals on a square mile, the idea of excessive numbers would have been a farce; it was a farce, however, which never entered into any one's head in those days. But the wretchedness of the inhabitants was more conspicuous then, when there was not a fifth of their present number, than it is even at present. In proof of this, I appeal to the authority of one who had, probably, better

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay on Population, book i. c. 2.

means of forming an accurate judgment on the subject, and greater abilities in availing himself of them, than most of those numerous writers who have since adverted to it, I mean Sir William Petty. For a description of the abject condition of the country at that period, I refer to his entire works, especially his “Anatomy of Ireland,” where its situation is minutely described; and in giving a few quotations from him, I cannot but remark that the condition of the bulk of the inhabitants, to have made so strong an impression upon him, when that of the same class in all countries was so wretchedly inferior to what it is at present, must have been miserable in the extreme. The houses of the commonalty of a country are always amongst the most obvious criteria of their condition, and these he thus describes: “lamentable sties<sup>1</sup>,” “wretched cabins<sup>2</sup>,” “such as themselves could make in three or four days<sup>3</sup>,” not worth five shillings the building<sup>4</sup>,—the filth and stench of which he fully explains<sup>5</sup>, and which may be imagined without quoting him. So that their habitations had not much improved since the time of Edmund Spenser, who calls them “sties rather than houses, which were the chiefest cause of the farmer’s so beastly manner of life and savage condition, lying and living together with his beast, in one house, in one room, in one bed, that is clean straw, or rather a foul dunghill<sup>6</sup>.” But to return to Sir William: the proportion of such houses as these, if they may be so called, he thus gives: “160,000,” says he, “out of the 200,000 houses of

<sup>1</sup> Petty, *Polit. Anat. of Ireland*; Tracts, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 327. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 351. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 351. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 354.

<sup>6</sup> Spenser, *View of Ireland*; Works, vol. vi. p. 134.

Ireland, are wretched cabins, without chimney, window, or door shut, even worse than those of the savages of America<sup>1</sup>." As to their houses, therefore, at that period, they were certainly no better than they are now, that "driving," or "clearing" landlords think they can only be purified by fire and destruction. As to building them fresh ones, that they never dream of; contrary to the practice of almost all other countries under the sun, the Irish cultivator has almost universally to provide house and buildings<sup>2</sup>; the proprietor can, therefore, destroy them at pleasure, and without detriment to himself.

Their food at this period, it is hardly necessary to state, corresponded in wretchedness with their dwellings. We have it on the same authority, that it consisted of "cakes, whereof a penny serves a week for each; potatoes from August till May: mussels, cockles, and oysters, near the sea: eggs and butter, made very rancid by keeping in bogs. As for flesh, they seldom eat it<sup>3</sup>." In a word, the "*vice du pays*," to use an expression of Mr. Malthus's old Swiss friend, then existed in full vigour; "they can content themselves," says Petty, "with potatoes<sup>4</sup>."

Half a century afterwards, when the population of Ireland, though increased, was still very thin, being, at the most, little above seventy on the square mile, we learn that the wretchedness of the people was but little abated, its cause not having been removed. We still find them living miserably, in their cabins<sup>5</sup>, and

<sup>1</sup> Petty, *Polit. Anat. of Ireland*; Tracts, p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> Wakefield's *Ireland*. Rt. Hon. C. Grant's Speech, 22 April, 1822.

<sup>3</sup> Petty, *Anat. of Ireland*; Tracts, p. 355. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 366.

<sup>5</sup> Prior's *List of the Absentees*, p. 91.

many subsisting in a state of actual beggary. Our "common people," says Dobbs, a friend of Archbishop Boulter, and certainly the best versed in the general condition of Ireland, of any man of his day, "our common people are very poorly clothed, go barelegged half the year, and very rarely taste of that flesh meat, with which we so much abound ; but are pinched in every article of life<sup>1</sup>." I refer to Archbishop Boulter's letters for a full account of the distresses of the Irish people at this period ; and will content myself with a general description of them in the words of one more competent witness, Swift. "Whatever stranger took a journey amongst us," says he, "would be apt to think himself travelling in Lapland or Iceland, rather than a country so favoured by nature as ours, both in fruitfulness of soil and temperature of climate. The miserable dress, and diet, and dwelling of the people ; the general desolation in most parts of the kingdom ; the old seats of the nobility and gentry in ruins, and no new ones in their stead ; the families of the farmers, who pay great rents, living in filth and nastiness, upon butter-milk and potatoes, without a shoe or stocking to their feet, or a house so convenient as an English hog-stie to receive them<sup>2</sup>;" these, he says, "are the comfortable sights which await an absentee, who may be induced to travel for once amongst them, to learn their language;" or, as at present, to make a book, and talk patriotically, on his return.

The description may be brought down to a later

<sup>1</sup> List of Absentees, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Swift, Short View of the State of Ireland ; Works, vol. vi. pp. 157, 158.

period by-and-bye; in the mean time, I would ask whether this state of things was then owing to redundant and excessive numbers, in relation to the means of subsistence which nature had provided?

(2.) Secondly: as to the numbers at present out of employment. This seems a main argument now-a-days, in proof of a redundant population in Ireland, and, indeed, throughout the whole empire, if not every where else, as far as I understand our anti-populationists. But a more absurd one, when urged distinctly from all other considerations, as it usually is, cannot well be imagined, or one which would, if true, be more destructive of the whole social system. How can it be imagined that, if the labours of five millions of human beings are necessary to each other, the labours of ten millions should be otherwise? I have elsewhere shown, from the very nature of things and the experience of mankind, they would become, in the latter case, in a higher degree mutually essential. To appeal to the difficulty of subsisting the larger number, vacates the foundation of the present argument,—only, however, to place it on grounds quite as untenable, as has been already seen, and will be still further proved.

But, to take no exceptions against the argument, as it is put, let us examine how it will prove the present evils of Ireland, in this respect, to proceed from redundant numbers.

In the former of the periods previously adverted to, Sir William Petty assures us that the people of Ireland are not *one-fifth* employed<sup>1</sup>! Elsewhere, he

<sup>1</sup> Petty, Polit. Anat. of Ireland; Tracts, p. 366.

says, those who were employed were very partially so. Bad as the state of Ireland now confessedly is in this respect, still it may be asked, do only about thirteen hundred thousand persons depend upon labour, and near five millions and a half eat the bread of total idleness? The late census is a sufficient answer to this question. Just in proportion as this ratio is altered for the better, just so much has the increase of the population of Ireland encouraged the better demand for labour amongst its inhabitants.

Nor are we to run away with the idea that a paucity of people is favourable to the manufacturing interests of a country. Dobbs, a century ago, said, "Our weavers are starving for want of employment<sup>1</sup>:" they could not then have been too thick upon the ground, for the population of Ulster was not a fourth of what it is at present. Half a century afterwards, the inhabitants not being estimated at half their present number, though corn was then abundant, the manufacturers were so totally unemployed, as not to be able to purchase it, and thousands of them were supported by the liberality of the public. The farmers, in equal distress, were in many places unable to pay their rents, and were every where involved in difficulties<sup>2</sup>.

Perhaps the inadequate remuneration of labour ought in fairness to have been added to the argument I am opposing. That this evil existed in the former periods alluded to, in a still greater degree, even than

<sup>1</sup> Prior, List of Absentees, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Wakefield's Account, &c., vol. ii. p. 10.



it does at present, I will not insult the reader's intelligence by further proving. The preceding statements render this conclusion inevitable, and the fact is recorded in every authentic account of Ireland which I have ever opened.

I cannot, however, dismiss this part of the inquiry without noticing the unfairness with which Ireland, in all possible respects, has been treated by our modern economists. It is the misfortune of the Irish not to be able to afford themselves any thing more palatable than potatoes; this is charged upon them as an evidence of their voluntary barbarism: they cannot obtain labour, (for reasons which will be presently pointed out,)—this is to brand them with the crime of idleness. It is false! In our harvest fields, or before our furnaces; in the bowels of the earth, or on the loftiest buildings, wherever labour can be obtained, no matter how dangerous or severe,—there are the Irish. The same is precisely the fact across the Atlantic; and yet their misery, according to many, is attributable to their indolence. “‘Ye are idle, ye are idle,’ answered Pharaoh to the Israelites, when they complained to his majesty that they were forced to make bricks without straw<sup>1</sup>.” The writers, however, to whom I have alluded, made no charges so absurdly false. Sir William Petty attributed their “lazing, to want of employment and encouragement to work<sup>2</sup>,” and we still find them, on the authority of official reports, when idle, idle

<sup>1</sup> Swift, *Short View of Ireland*; Works, vol. vi. p. 160. See also vol. iii. p. 414.

<sup>2</sup> Petty, *Polit. Anat. of Ireland*; Tracts, p. 366.

only from necessity; being “extremely anxious for employment, and as grateful for it<sup>1</sup>.”

(3.) Next, as to the scarcities in Ireland being a proof of superfluous numbers. We must deal with this precisely as with the former arguments. We know it as a fact, that these not only returned far more frequently in former times, when the population was extremely scanty, but that they continued much longer than they do at present. To commence as before, with the first period mentioned in the table: we learn, on the authority of Sir William Temple, that, “notwithstanding the great fertility of that island, years of scarcity amounting to famine frequently occurred<sup>2</sup>.” According to Mr. Newenham, between the years 1641 and 1652, flour had risen above four hundred per cent<sup>3</sup>. Indeed the general parsimony and want in which the Irish then subsisted, we should take to be a perpetual dearth; their condition, it is true, fluctuated like that of all other people, whatever be the size of their territory, whatever the number of the inhabitants. But, just to convince the reader that these recurring periods of scarcity are not peculiar to the present times, but that they were much severer in Ireland, as I have already shown to have been the case in all other countries<sup>4</sup>, when the population was the scantiest, I will quote one author only, from the many that dwell upon this

<sup>1</sup> Report on the State of Ireland, part iv. p. 619. Evidence before the Lords, p. 428—“They are the most anxious people in the world to get labour.”

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Temple, Works, vol. iii. p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Newenham, Statistical Inquiry, &c. p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Vide* Treatise on the Law of Population, about to be published, book ii. ch. 5.

point, and one of such a character as, I trust, will fully satisfy him upon it. Referring to the population of Ireland a century ago, and to the entire letters of the Lord Primate and Justice, Archbishop Boulter, for a full description of its actual condition at that period, I shall make but one or two extracts from him at present. "If our crop fails," says the Archbishop, "or yields indifferently, our poor have not money to buy bread. This was the case in 1725, and last year; and, without a prodigious crop, will be more so this year. When I went my visitation last year, barley, in some inland places, sold at six shillings the bushel, to make bread of; and oatmeal, the bread of the north, sold for twice or thrice its usual price. We met all the roads full of whole families that had left their homes to beg abroad, since their neighbours had nothing to relieve them with. And as the winter subsistence of the poor is chiefly potatoes, this scarcity drove the poor to begin with their potatoes before they were full grown, so that they have lost half the benefit of them, and have spent their stock two months sooner than usual; and oatmeal is, at this distance from harvest, in many parts of the kingdom, three times the customary price: so that this summer will be more fatal to us than the last, when, I fear, **MANY HUNDREDS PERISHED OF FAMINE**<sup>1</sup>!" We find, by a subsequent letter of the same writer, that the calamity still continued, so he states, under date May, 1728<sup>2</sup>. Nay, after another harvest, namely, in the November fol-

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Boulter's Letters, vol. i. p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 241.

lowing, he thus writes to the Duke of Newcastle: "I am sorry I am obliged to give your Grace so melancholy an account of the state of this kingdom as I shall in this letter, but I thought it my duty to let his Majesty know our condition." He then describes the dearness of provisions, and the universal distress which prevailed, and adds further information, to which I shall hereafter advert. In one word, such was the state of Ireland, that he represents the people as "suffering little less than a famine every other year<sup>1</sup>." It is almost unnecessary for me to remark, that, under these emergencies, general subscriptions were resorted to<sup>2</sup>, and issues of the public money made from time to time, as on a late occasion.

In dwelling on the condition of Ireland a century ago, I have not selected that period as the only one suitable to my argument: the whole of its past history is illustrative of it. As to dearths and famines being proof of an over-population, the supposition is equally absurd when applied to Ireland, as it would be in reference to all other countries. The calamities just mentioned were, as already remarked, no strange events in the past history of the island, nor did they cease with those memorable years. As soon afterwards as the years 1740 and 1741, the horrors of scarcity again returned, and thousands of the poor people are said to have perished through absolute want<sup>3</sup>. There were then, however, at least fifty acres of land to each family throughout the whole island, supposing every soul had been an agriculturist.

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Boulter's Letters, vol. i. p. 241.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Commercial Restraints, p. 47. Smith's Kerry, p. 77.

Again, in 1757, a period of great misery must have ensued; the lord-lieutenant obtaining the king's letter, dated March 31, 1757, for £20,000, to be expended in such manner as was most likely to relieve the suffering people<sup>1</sup>. Again, in 1765, the crop of potatoes failed throughout the whole country; so also had that of the spring corn, and the price of grain became so high that the most alarming consequences followed, the people being every where reduced to a state of the utmost distress. The following year the suffering so increased, that money was issued from the treasury to purchase grain<sup>2</sup>. In 1770 and 1771, scarcity and high prices again returned, and produced most distressing consequences<sup>3</sup>. At this period there were more than forty acres of land to every family in the country.

Having thus brought the argument down to within about half a century of the present time, and examined the previous period of about an equal duration, I shall now challenge those who resolve the scarcities of Ireland into a redundant population, to take it up from thence, and continue it to the present time: I will give them all the advantage of the calamities which the general rebellion occasioned, and even those which the spread and increase of absenteeism inflicts, and still abide by the result. We have seen, in less than half a century in the former period, eleven years of what such would, if it suited their argument, denominate famine; the highest population little exceeding two millions and an half: let them show us, from thence

<sup>1</sup> Commercial Restraints, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76, 77. Wakefield, vol. ii. p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

to this time, when the inhabitants have accumulated to nearly seven millions, anything approaching to this state of things, and I will concede that they understand the principle of population and its effects better than Providence. But, with the "oracular solemnity of the raven of the tribe," they still portentously repeat, "Population! population!" As to the modern specific, deportation, now the grand scheme of our modern theorists, to that the people resorted themselves, and in numbers which awakened the strongest regrets for his country in the patriotic prelate already quoted, and many others in those days. In this reference, however, I am forestalling a future branch of my argument. But it is a fact that may be repeated, while the cry of emigration is ringing in our ears, that a still greater number of that unhappy people in proportion to the entire population, had then to abandon their ancient homes, and seek an uncertain subsistence in distant climes and countries, than it is proposed to send on that errand at present. So redundant have they always been in every period of their history!

(4.) And lastly, as to the frequent recurrence of epidemics. "The probability and fatality of these," it is declared, "are rendered considerably greater, as a population increases, nearly to the utmost limits of food<sup>1</sup>:" limits, however, which no nation upon earth ever approached, and no man upon earth ever calculated: to attempt it even, is much more likely to expose the limits of a man's understanding than those of the Divine Benevolence. It has been shown that,

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, p. 18, 4to.

as it respects the world at large, epidemics have diminished greatly in frequency and fatality as numbers have increased; nor is Ireland, notwithstanding the present appeal, an exception. Unhappily circumstanced as that country is, still none of its sufferings can be dragged up as unwilling witnesses against its population, and this least of any. Again commencing with the first period of the table, the following brief account, in which much is necessarily omitted, will show whether the epidemics of Ireland can be attributed to its large population.

Sir William Temple, who lived in that period, informs us, that “hundreds of thousands of the population of Ireland were periodically swept off by the plague<sup>1</sup>,” meaning, as it is believed, that epidemical fever, which we learn, from the best medical authority, was common to the country during the seventeenth century<sup>2</sup>. But to particularise some of these, which we are enabled to do, notwithstanding the information on such subjects is, as it respects Ireland, especially at these periods, confessedly scanty. In 1684, a very severe epidemic occurred<sup>3</sup>. Four years afterwards it again made its appearance<sup>4</sup>. About the year 1708 a similar calamity was again general; and it returned after a much shorter interval than before, and raged in the years 1718, 1719, 1720, and 1721; for it is a lamentable fact, that the fevers of Ireland, especially those of the earlier periods alluded to, seldom sub-

<sup>1</sup> Temple, Works, vol. iii. p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Boate, Nat. Hist. of Ireland; quoted in Drs. Baker and Cheyne, vol i. p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Webster on Epidemics, vol. i. p. 353.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Short, Hist. of Air and Seasons, vol. i. p. 268.



sided in less than three or four years ; some, indeed, suppose that they were never wholly eradicated. Then again, from 1728 to 1732, there was a fever of five years' continuance experienced, after an intermission of seven years only. The fever returned again after a lapse of eight years, and continued, indeed, a much shorter time than before ; but it more than compensated, in the eyes of our modern philosophers, for the shortness of its duration, by the "clearance" it made of the "redundant numbers." In this dreadful visitation, Dr. Rutty, the accurate historian of the weather, health, &c. of Ireland, says, one-fifth part of the people perished. A lower estimate, and indeed the lowest, computes the victims at this dreadful period at 80,000! Dr. Short says, it was little short of the plague in fatality<sup>1</sup>. Now at this period there were probably fewer than seventy inhabitants on every square mile, in one of the most fertile countries in the world : will then any of our anti-populationists dare to attribute this calamity to the laws of population and Providence? On the contrary, it fell the heaviest where the inhabitants were the thinnest ; that is, in the province of Connaught ; and in Galway in that province, the thinnest inhabited county in the country<sup>2</sup>. Since Dr. Rutty's time, I am not aware that there have been any historians of the health of Ireland, till Drs. Baker and Cheyne appeared, whose able work on the late fever there has recently been given to the public. Nor does the chasm concern the argument : it has been already shown, that, to whatever cause these calamities have

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Short, *Hist. of Air and Seasons*, vol. ii. p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> Drs. Baker and Cheyne, vol. i. p. 6. Dr. Short, vol. ii. p. 268.

to be assigned, it is palpably false to say, as to suit a special purpose it is now said, that they originate in excessive numbers.

In fine, all those sufferings which the prevailing theory pronounces as necessarily flowing from an excessive population, and as forming the certain evidence of such being the case, not only existed, but existed in a higher degree, when the inhabitants were wholly inadequate to possess or cultivate a quarter of the soil, than they do at the present moment. To these conclusive facts the momentary attention of the "Emigration Committee," its chairman and members, as well as its chosen evidences, one and all, is respectfully invited. That the opinion should be correct which attributes the ancient abuses of Ireland, and its consequent misery to its dense population, were every political economist in the empire to preach such a doctrine, and every minister of state to act upon it, is palpably impossible, unless we are to believe that effects may precede their causes a century or two. "The march of intellect" has, however, almost arrived at this point, and indeed, in this instance, is already there.

(5.) It forms, indeed, a most singular feature of the present argument, not only that the whole train of evils which have long afflicted Ireland, now ignorantly attributed to her overflowing numbers, existed long before the alleged cause had any being; but that persons fully as competent to observe and decide on the subject, as any of those who now dogmatise upon it, clearly pointing out the whole of them, unhesitatingly attributed them to a diametrically opposite reason, namely, to the fewness of the people.

Amongst these were Sir William Temple<sup>1</sup>, Lord Clarendon<sup>2</sup>, Dean Swift, Sir William Petty, &c.; the number of such authorities it would be far more easy largely to increase, than to add much to their weight. From the latter only I shall quote a single passage, referring, for a comment upon it, to the whole of some of his principal works. The following passage closes his *Political Anatomy of Ireland*: "The greatest and most fundamental defect of this kingdom is, the want of people<sup>3</sup>!"

But I shall not pursue the *argumentum ad verecundiam*, which, expunged as it is from the logic of the modern school, would only injure the cause attempted to be supported. Such an appeal, indeed, would only prove that he who made it had not advanced so far in the "march of mind" as to have his back turned upon the former authorities of this country, the lights of a by-gone world. Such men as Bacon, and Locke, and Addison, and Swift might have twinkled in their day; but where are they, when our later authorities blaze upon us? It is unanimously admitted that they cannot shine together. I will therefore again betake myself to a few facts, which are of a nature too stubborn to be easily silenced.

Before I proceed, it must be observed, that the author of a popular essay on population, may, perhaps, be enabled to reconcile the preceding statements to his system, as announced by himself; inasmuch as that system occasionally maintains that its principle na-

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Temple, Works, vol. iii. p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Clarendon, Letters, vol. ii. p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Sir William Petty, *Anatomy of Ireland*; Tracts, p. 388.

turally produces the evils in question, in every stage of human increase, “from the very commencement of society:” repeating, in every possible variety of phrase, that there is “a constant tendency, in all animated life, to increase beyond the means of nourishment prepared for it<sup>1</sup> ;” and that, as it respects human beings especially, the difference betwixt the ratios of their increase and that of their food is of the most appalling kind. His system, therefore, is comprehensive enough to admit all the evils which we have proved to exist in Ireland, whatever might be the state of its population ; but we shall examine whether his postulate, the geometric and arithmetic ratios of increase, be true, as it regards that country, or whether they exhibit the slightest “tendency” to become so. And surely there has seldom been an arena upon earth, on which his theory could have had a better chance : so many evils crowd upon that country, from so many different quarters, that there never has been the least difficulty in proving the distresses of the people ; and as their numbers have kept constantly increasing, nothing was easier than to attribute them to that increase. Were, then, the general argument pursued at large elsewhere, that increasing numbers naturally occasion increasing prosperity, to have failed in the instance of Ireland, I certainly should not have abandoned the position ; nay, I candidly confess, that I did expect that this country, owing to causes extraneous to the principle at issue, would have constituted an exception to a rule otherwise universal. Encouraged, however, by the fact of all the seeming difficulties

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, *Essay on Population*, p. 2.

which have presented themselves during similar inquiries and calculations, having, on due examination, ultimately resolved themselves into arguments in favour of the principle announced, and some of them of the strongest kind ; I determined, that even Ireland was a subject “not to be given over, but waited on a little,” to use an expression of Lord Bacon. With what success this course has been pursued, especially in the calculations that conclude these pages, must be left to the determination of the reader.

§ IV. (1.) Having, I trust, already fully proved that the distresses of Ireland cannot be charged on the increase of its population, I now advance my argument another and far higher step, by inquiring, whether the alleged tendency in numbers to increase faster than food, is not false as it respects that country ; or to the still greater confusion of such a position, whether there has not been (not to speak of tendencies merely, but facts) an actual increase of food, far greater than that of the population, rapidly as, it must be confessed, it has accumulated ? I shall, of course, limit my inquiries, in this stage of the argument, to the surplus quantities of food raised in different periods, that being the sole question in reference to the principle of population ; in subsequently pursuing the subject, when accounting for the distresses which, nevertheless, exist in Ireland, I shall not imitate those who absolve human institutions<sup>1</sup>, in order to lay the miseries of mankind at the door of their Eternal Benefactor.

To anticipate an objection that may be made in

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay, p. 367.

reference to the nature of the general food of the country at present, about which so much is said, I mean the potatoe, let this suffice—the food of the native Irish was principally, if not exclusively, vegetable, long before the potatoe was known in Europe. Nay, in almost the first glimpses we have of them, they are represented to us as herbaceous, *ποηφάγσι*, for such is the expression of Solinus. So they continue to be described by Spenser<sup>1</sup>, and Hollingshed<sup>2</sup>, and Camden: the latter says, “as for their meats, they feed willingly upon herbs and watercresses, especially upon mushrooms, shamroots, and roots<sup>3</sup>.” The exchange, therefore, of the potatoe, which is all but bread in nutritiousness, greatly exceeding it in palatableness, and affording a vaster and far more certain supply for the plants on which they before principally subsisted, is one of the many changes brought about by an enlarging population, which none, I think, can deny is of a most gratifying character.

(2.) But not to annoy, unnecessarily, the opposers of population, by any further allusions to this root, let us confine our further inquiries to better fare. And, first, has the production of *corn* kept pace with the increase of the population? In answering this query, let the number of inhabitants, at each of the periods referred to, be still kept in recollection, and I think the selfish and cruel system will receive its death-blow, in the very scene where it meditates its triumph.

<sup>1</sup> State of Ireland, Works, vol. vi. p.

<sup>2</sup> Hollingshed, vol. v. p. 185; vol. vi. p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Camden, Ireland, p. 147, folio, 1637.

In the seventeenth century, Ireland imported grain<sup>1</sup>. But not to dwell on generalities, and to present the reader with definite views of this important fact. Referring, first, to a period, when the condition of Ireland, which has been already described, was at least as deplorable as it can have been at any subsequent period of tranquillity, namely, a century ago, we shall find that grain, as well as other of the necessities of life, were imported in large quantities. The average amounts of what Dobbs classes under the heads of imports for meat and drink, and materials for drinking, (including medicine) was £344,550, annually. Some exports of grain of different kinds, he notices, there then were, but not such as by any means to balance the imports. This sum was on the average of eight years, ending 1726, and consequently exclusive of the years of scarcity previously alluded to, when we are informed there were to the amount of from £100,000 to £200,000, in grain only, brought in<sup>2</sup>. But to present the amount of these imports in ordinary years, and to contrast them with the exports of Ireland, at the period of the last census, 1821, and accompanying the statement with the number of inhabitants at each period, the following are the important facts:—

<sup>1</sup> Newenham, Statistical Inquiry, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Dobbs, Essay on the Trade, &c. of Ireland, p. 25.



IRELAND <sup>1</sup> .	
CORN IMPORTED, On an average of 6 years, ending 1725.	CORN EXPORTED, in 1821.
Population, 2,300,000 ; or, 71 on a square mile.	Population, 6,801,827 ; or, 211 on a square mile.
Wheat . . . . . 27,018	Wheat . . . . . 1,038,937
Barley and Malt . . . 7,255	Oats . . . . . 959,474
Hulled ditto . . . . . 677	Barley . . . . . 78,588
Flour . . . . . 4,083	Meal (Wheat) . . . . 252,010
	Oatmeal . . . . . 37,156
39,053	Total value of exports £2,366,165
Total value of imports } at prices of 1821. } £78,126	

Here, then, we see demonstrated the important political problem, whether population has a natural tendency to increase faster than food, or otherwise. When Ireland, in 1725, only numbered seventy-one inhabitants on a square mile, she *imported* grain, in ordinary times, to the amount of twenty or thirty thousand quarters annually<sup>2</sup>; but, when her population, on the same space, became trebled, she not only (of necessity) subsisted that number, and certainly not worse than at the former period, but actually *exported* a surplus of much above a million quarters<sup>3</sup>!

(3.) Should it be said that Ireland was, in the former period, a grazing country, in consequence of the impediments which landlords threw in the way of tillage, on whose impolicy and cruelty Archbishop Boulter dwells very feelingly in many of his letters<sup>4</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Dobbs, Essay on the Trade, &c. of Ireland, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Public Accounts.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Boulter, Letters, vol. i. pp. 223, 241, &c.

till the evil was at length partly remedied by a legislative interference, the consequence of which was a vast increase of the products in question ; I shall not argue this point, but betake myself to the produce of the pasturage of the country, (which, of course, must have been proportionably checked,) in order to discover whether there is a tendency in population to exceed even these means of human subsistence, which confessedly take the largest proportion of surface, and the best soils to produce them. This second inquiry I shall determine in precisely the same manner as before. Ireland certainly exported cattle, and very largely, at the former period ; they constituted the bulk of her returns : has, then, the vast augmentation in the population, since that time, diminished, or rather annihilated, that export, and “ absorbed ” (to use the favourite word of the day) the surplus produce of the country, as it regards this species of human food ? The following facts will best answer that query :—

IRELAND.	
Value of the Produce of Cattle and Sheep exported on the average of Eight Years, ending 1726.	Value of the Produce of Cattle and Sheep exported in 1821.
Population, 2,300,000, or 71 on each Square Mile.	Population, 6,801,827, or 211 on each Square Mile.
Total average value, £623,177. <sup>1</sup>	Total value, £3,705,993. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dobbs, Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Public Accounts.

The argument might be minutely pursued through the intervening period, but it is unnecessary: it is singular enough, however, to observe, that midway between these two dates (1777), the population having considerably advanced, there was nearly a balance between the imports and exports of grain, or, in other words, Ireland about grew its own bread<sup>1</sup>. Since, then, the population has rather more than doubled, how has the constant tendency, which our theorists perpetually assert, been manifested? By sextupling the agricultural produce<sup>2</sup>.

With such facts as the preceding tables exhibit, recorded in the statistical annals of the empire, and which are, and long have been, published to the world, certainly the fatuity, not to say mendacity, of these constant appeals to Ireland in proof that population naturally multiplies more rapidly than the means of subsistence, is without parallel. I challenge any one to add anything in the way of illustration to the broad and glaring absurdity which such a principle exhibits, as applied to Ireland. Let our political economists concede to a plain man of ordinary capacity that sound judgment in human affairs, which Archbishop Tillotson claims for such an one, even on the more mysterious truths of religion—a judgment which, whether they concede to him or not, he most certainly possesses; and let him be told the foregoing facts regarding Ireland:—that, a century ago, the population, then being but a little more than two millions, could not supply itself with grain; but

<sup>1</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland*, pp. 2, 86.

<sup>2</sup> Colquhoun; *Wealth, Power, and Resources of the Empire*, p. 14, note.

that now, with its inhabitants trebled, it is not only enabled so to do, but to export at least ten millions of bushels, as well as six times the amount in cattle (perhaps about thrice as many head), as at the former period ;—and could he be brought to understand and believe that population there had advanced more rapidly than food ; that, if things were suffered to go on thus, universal distress and ruin must inevitably ensue,—in a word, that the principle of human increase operates in that island as an evil ? And what would it avail, were it told him that the cultivators were, in the mean time, faring most wretchedly themselves, and actually suffering for want of sufficient support. He would instantly rejoin, why then do they not retain some part of these immense exports, to satisfy their own necessities ? And, if he were an English cultivator, he would be the readier to recommend such a measure. But, that he must, in compliment to the principle of population, see present suffering and future starvation awaiting a people, merely on the score of increasing numbers, while he is shown that such increase has actually produced a far larger measure of superfluous provision, which has to find a vent elsewhere, in quantities which actually inundate other markets ; would be rather too much to demand from a man of common sense. Place such a man on the committee, and he would think about preventing the undue emigration of corn, and cattle, and pigs, rather than promoting that of the people.

If then it be conceded, (and can it be denied ?) that the evils which now afflict that country cannot possibly be attributed to a large population, existing as

they did, and at least in an equal degree when the country was notoriously underpeopled; and if, furthermore, it be admitted (and I again defy the fact to be controverted) that the produce of the country has far more than kept pace with the increase in its inhabitants, till, in point of fact, it has augmented into an immense superflux which has to be disposed of elsewhere, the argument which I oppose is finally settled as it regards Ireland; and might here very properly close. But it is not less the purpose of the work of which this forms a part, to demolish to its very foundation the false and pernicious theory which now unhappily prevails, than to substitute another founded upon truth, and consistent with the principles of justice and mercy. After having established its certainty as a law of nature, the next design has been to show that it has always operated to the advantage and not to the detriment of the human race, and that the natural increase of mankind has therefore been the signal, nay the very means, of their advancement in all that constitutes human superiority. But though the facts, and more especially the calculations on which it is founded, have never yet been submitted to a single individual during the progress of the work, who has not instantly acceded to the conclusion as inevitable, I must confess, that all such have, on recollection as it were, pointed to the condition of Ireland, as disturbing their otherwise entire acquiescence with the principle disclosed: hence, on a matter regarded as so essential to the argument, and especially one which is so present to the mind of Britons, and so deeply touches their feelings, it is necessary to be explicit. To me the

situation of Ireland, circumstanced as she is, corroborates, rather than confronts, whatever I have advanced on the law of population throughout. In pursuing the melancholy subject, though I have witnessed the sufferings of that country often, and meditated upon them more frequently, still I shall state nothing on my own authority. Those who may accompany me into the remaining details, may find some little novelty in seeing the sufferings of that unhappy people attributed to other causes than either to potatoes, or to propagation: causes which I advert to with unfeigned reluctance, but on which, adverting to them at all, I shall deliver myself with the utmost plainness. I am aware of the treatment of those

“ Who truths invidious, to the great, reveal,”

for it is on them, and not, as is now the fashion, upon defenceless and persecuted poverty that I shall fix the wrongs of Ireland, aye, and her outrages; those convulsions at which the nation stands aghast, and feels ever and anon as a mighty earthquake shaking the very foundations of the empire, while the voice of distant thunders is still heard threatening from the cloud that gathers in the west, where the angry elements seem in perpetual war.

(4.) But before I proceed to these considerations, I maintain that Ireland, peculiarly circumstanced as she is, has nevertheless participated, though in a humble degree, in the advantages naturally resulting from increasing numbers. That she does not furnish a more triumphant argument in favour of the principle of benevolence, is not chargeable upon the laws of nature and of God.



We have seen the great increase in the population of Ireland during the last century ; we proceed then to inquire, whether the condition of the people proportionably deteriorated, which the principle I am opposing means to imply, if it mean anything ; or, on the contrary, whether such increase was a benefit to the community. Let competent witnesses be heard on this matter, and the dispute be decided accordingly. “ Can those who now hear me, deny,” said the celebrated Mr. Foster to a sufficient number of competent judges, the representatives of Ireland, “ that, since the period of 1782, Ireland has risen in civilization, in wealth, in manufactures, in a greater proportion, and with a more rapid progress, than any other country of Europe <sup>1</sup>.” Again, Lord Sheffield, the pursuits of whose life seem to have been almost exclusively directed to subjects of public and national economy especially relating to this country, says, “ the improvement of Ireland is as rapid as any country ever experienced <sup>2</sup>.” But, not to multiply authorities on this point, I shall lastly quote Major Newenham, to whose researches respecting this subject the public is so much indebted. Presenting many most important facts relative to the population and condition of the country, in a series of Tables, he finally observes upon them : “ They evince, beyond the possibility of a doubt, a most rapid increase of people in Ireland ; and at the same time exhibit in a clear light this interesting fact, that, within these last five-and-twenty years, or thereabout, the food in that country has not been merely

<sup>1</sup> Speech in the House of Commons, 17 Feb. 1800.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Sheffield, Observations on the Trade, &c. of Ireland, p. 6.



commensurate with, but has *greatly surpassed* the rapid and well-authenticated increase of its population<sup>1</sup>."

§ V. (1.) Yet notwithstanding these cheering testimonies in favour of the progress of population, it must be admitted that much suffering and great national degradation exist in this interesting portion of the British empire, which, I am not without a painful apprehension, may have been latterly increased, owing to their real cause having been aggravated rather than diminished<sup>2</sup>; while they are still further heightened, at least rendered more conspicuous, by being contrasted with the rapid advancement of the other grand divisions of the kingdom.

In fixing upon this cause, I have not far to seek nor long to deliberate. It has been deeply felt, and powerfully pointed out, ever since the state of Ireland has excited the consideration of the empire. One which every writer of any note, or patriot of any principle or feeling, on either side the water, who has given attention to its affairs, has designated the prime curse of the country; compared with which every other momentary topic of declamation has sunk into insignificance: one indeed which the modern school of political theorists stoutly denies as an evil, and consequently labours to prevent the application of that remedy, without which Ireland will always be pushed to the utmost verge of destitution, and consequently of endurance. I trust I need hardly explain that I mean ABSENTEEESHIP.

<sup>1</sup> Newenham, Statistical Inquiry, &c. p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> See an account of the increase of absenteeism since 1797, in Drs. Baker and Cheyne's work, vol. i. p. 12; see likewise the Lords' Report on the Disturbances in Ireland, p. 207, &c.

Formerly, this ancient enemy of Ireland, or, to speak more literally, "the cut-purse of the empire," concealed its footsteps as much as possible, and when observed, disguised itself under a number of specious pretences and apologies. Health; safety; education; and a variety of other reasons were always forthcoming, amounting, on the whole, to a kind of necessity; and necessity, as is well known, can have no law, whether of duty or gratitude. Now, however, fully absolved by political economy, and even invested with peculiar honours, it no longer seeks concealment, but boldly avows itself; affects the language and assumes the pretensions of genuine patriotism, and perpetually stuns you with declamations concerning a country which it personally deserts, and is constantly pillaging and oppressing by proxy.

(2.) To estimate the mass of misery which this evil has occasioned, we must attend to its origin, and long continuance, as well as to its present extent. Ireland only shared the fate of England in having been a conquered country, but it has been more unfortunate than the latter in having been frequently subdued;—a variety of causes, amongst which the very evil we are considering may be regarded as one of the most powerful, though perhaps the least obvious, having occasioned those frequent insubordinations and rebellions which so disfigure its history. These have always been quelled and punished; hence few generations have elapsed, especially in former times, without witnessing the confiscations of large portions of the property of the island. To go no farther back than Queen Elizabeth's time: three re-

bellions during that period were the cause of placing a great part of the lands of Ireland at the disposal of the crown. Leland says, more than one half of Ulster became vested in the queen, "to be disposed of as most expedient for the interests and security of her government<sup>1</sup>." A greater authority, and one connected with the transactions he records, Edmund Spenser, gives a vastly higher proportion. Of the 9000 ploughlands which Ulster contained, all but 400 or 500 he represents as having escheated to her<sup>2</sup>. In Connaught, I understand him to calculate, that at least five-sixths of the whole were in the same predicament<sup>3</sup>: and even in Leinster, exceedingly large tracts, consisting of entire counties, were similarly circumstanced<sup>4</sup>. As to Munster, at the period he wrote, it appears very much of it was already in the hands of her "undertakers<sup>5</sup>." Indeed, by the single attainder and death of the Earl of Desmond, "enormous domains," as large as "the possessions of independent princes," fell to her disposal<sup>6</sup>, besides sundry other minor forfeitures. In the reign of her successor, James I., the greatest and most valuable part of Ulster again reverted to the crown, in consequence of the treasonable practices of Tyrone, Tyrconnel, and others, their adherents<sup>7</sup>. During the interregnum, confiscations to a far greater extent occurred. The fluctuation and uncertainty in the landed property throughout the island, at the period of the restoration, may be seen by opening two or three

<sup>1</sup> Leland, *Hist. of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 247, 4to.

<sup>2</sup> Spenser, *State of Ireland*, Works, vol. vi. p. 176, 12mo.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 179, 180. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 183, 184. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 185, 186.

<sup>6</sup> Leland, *Hist. of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 288. <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 424.

of the first pages in Sir William Petty's "Anatomy of Ireland." At the revolution, another seizure of very considerable extent, and it is to be hoped the last, took place, when upwards of a million acres of land were forfeited at once : more than half of these, however, were afterwards restored, as well as, probably, much of the preceding ones<sup>1</sup> : much, however, was permanently withheld from the former possessors, and bestowed, of course, in many instances, on the retainers of the court for the time being ; almost always, however, on condition of residence, which many nevertheless contrived to evade, letting their acquisitions under various tenures to resident cultivators.

The extent of these forfeitures is far from being exaggerated. Lord Clare says that, of the twelve millions of acres which the island contains, eleven and a half underwent confiscation, during the one century last referred to.

I most distinctly disclaim alluding to these irritating topics with any other view than that which renders an appeal to them necessary to prove and illustrate the important point which I am now about to enforce. I will even acknowledge that, perhaps, these fluctuations in the landed property of Ireland, consequent upon her connexion with this country, were not so frequent and universal as those which were perpetually taking place under the antient Irish custom of tanistry, as it was called, by which the whole landed property of the country was constantly changing hands<sup>2</sup>. Even after this custom was abolished, these

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Petty, *Polit. Anat. of Ireland*, pp. 1—4.

<sup>2</sup> See Spenser's *Account of Ireland*, Works, vol. vi.

extensive forfeitures fell principally upon ancient English proprietors, who were successively dispossessed several times over; which fully accounts for the otherwise extraordinary fact, that there are fictitious claims to property in Ireland to a far greater extent than the entire area of the country. But, whatever truth there may be in these remarks, it is wide of my present purpose to dwell upon them: it only concerns the argument to state that, had the property in Ireland, forfeited from time to time, been conferred upon those who were residents in the country, or likely to remain so, such spoliations, though inflicting great individual suffering, would not perhaps have materially impoverished it; but, when they were bestowed upon those who did not reside in it, upon a mere unregarded engagement that they would do so; or who, residing there, were, in consequence of these accessions of fortune, too often tempted to leave it for an establishment nearer the focus of the empire, or still more culpable, who were thus enabled to spend their acquired wealth beyond the boundaries of the British dominions,—then and thus was it that the evils of absenteeism commenced, and, by the sure and constant operation of this adequate cause, the impoverishment of Ireland has been begun and continued, and will never end till, by some means or other, this crying injury shall be abated.

(3.) The fatal consequences of absenteeism have long been forcibly portrayed, by a great body of writers, familiar with the situation and sufferings of Ireland, a few only of whom will be quoted.

Sir William Petty says, that “a great part of the

estates, both real and personal, in Ireland, are owned by absentees, and such as draw over the profits raised out of Ireland, refunding nothing: so as Ireland, exporting more than it imports, doth yet grow poorer to a paradox<sup>1</sup>." In the same page, he attributes the lamentable want of employment and the idleness of Ireland to the same fatal cause, absenteeism.

In about half a century afterwards, we find this evil had not abated. Dobbs, as it is believed, published, under the assumed name of Prior, in 1729, a list of the absentees, as far as he could collect them, estimating the annual subtraction of wealth, from this cause, at £627,799<sup>2</sup>—a prodigious sum at that time, and for such a country; the rental of which, it is supposed, did not then exceed two millions. This estimate is fully confirmed by a very judicious English writer, of that period. Gee, in his work on the Trade and Navigation of Great Britain, says, "it is thought near one third part of the rents of the whole (of Ireland) belong to English noblemen and gentlemen that dwell here<sup>3</sup>." I shall give a few extracts from the former writer, and hope that the first will be particularly noticed:—"By means of our nobles and gentry deserting their own country, and spending all abroad, our people are left without employment, and are forced to shift to other countries, even to America, to get a livelihood<sup>4</sup>." "'Tis not to be wondered at that we should grow poorer every day, under such an unprofitable issue of money, which all the labour of

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Petty, *Political Anatomy of Ireland*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Prior, *List of Absentees of Ireland*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Gee, *Trade and Navy of Great Britain*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *List of Absentees*, p. 23.



the people and produce of the country, with every acquisition they can make, are not sufficient to supply<sup>1</sup>.” “This is an evil long complained of.” “There is no country in Europe which produces and exports so great a quantity of beef, butter, tallow, hides, and wool as Ireland does ; and yet, our common people are very poorly clothed, go bare-legged half the year, and very rarely taste of that fresh meat with which we so much abound. We pinch ourselves of every article of life, and export more than we can well spare, with no other effect or advantage than to enable our gentlemen and ladies to live more luxuriantly abroad.” “And they are not content to treat us thus, but add insult to ill usage : they reproach us with our poverty, at the same time that they take away our money<sup>2</sup>.”

Dean Swift describes the consequences of absenteeism. He says it “required those great remittances which perpetually drained the country<sup>3</sup> :” that it drove “half the farmers and labourers into beggary and banishment<sup>4</sup> ;” in a word, that it was the one great evil of Ireland—“*Nostra miseria magna es*<sup>5</sup>.”

That this state of things has continued to the present day, and I fear increased, admits of little doubt. The effect of absenteeism is every where obvious to the eye. “So numerous are abandoned edifices in Ireland,” says a recent intelligent writer on that country, “that they keep alive a train of melancholy ideas in the mind of the traveller. They who reared these piles, and filled these rooms with mirth, who gave

<sup>1</sup> List of Absentees, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Swift, Works, vol. vi. p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 180.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 158.



plenty and employment to the poor, are now in their tombs, and their living successors, dead to patriotism, dwell in other lands, and leave the home of their ancestors a wilderness.—Every one must wish such absentees could be made to reside in the country, —to enrich it with their fortunes, ornament it with their taste, improve the morals of the people by their example, refine them by their politeness, and protect them by their authority ; then might we hope to see the laws respected, the rich beloved, and Ireland tranquil and happy<sup>1</sup>.” But the scientific agriculturist is still more struck with the misery occasioned by this grand evil, than the sentimental traveller. Young is copious on this subject, and Curwen faithfully describes, from ocular proof, the “ ruin” it inflicts<sup>2</sup>; and as to misery—speaking of an estate belonging to some absentee, he says, “ the waters of oblivion can never wash out the stains which the scenes of woe, witnessed this day, have impressed upon my mind<sup>3</sup>.”

I shall not proceed with these quotations ; but appeal to the many attempts that have been made both of a public and private kind, as well as the statutes that have been from time to time passed to repress this great evil, of the existence of which they form a mass of public evidence. Much, however, as has been attempted, nothing has been effectually and permanently done, and the evil has even gone on increasing, more especially since the rebellion, and the legislative union of the two kingdoms, till the amount of property thus

<sup>1</sup> Croker, *Researches in the South of Ireland*, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Curwen, *Observations on the State of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 187.

annually abstracted is calculated at some millions<sup>1</sup>, forming a very onerous tax upon the entire rental and income of the country. Had England, even, been doomed to bear such a burthen, she would never have arisen to her present towering height ; were it now imposed upon her in an equal degree, it would ultimately reduce her to the condition in which Ireland is, and in which she must remain till the load is finally lightened or removed.

(4.) The low and degrading poverty to which Ireland is thus reduced, though in itself a great evil, is, nevertheless, one of the very least which absenteeism inflicts. And first, as to those which are caused by the total abandonment of the most important duties. Few, I think, who are the advocates of the social system, and especially amongst those who are placed at its summit, but must be eager to acknowledge, that the duties it imposes are reciprocal, and that their due discharge becomes the more important, the more elevated and commanding the station occupied. What, then, I would ask, must be the certain consequence, when those whom civil institutions have placed in the highest rank, and invested with the most extensive influence, totally abandon their proper sphere, and desert their numerous and degraded dependents ? As to wealth being accumulated or diffused under such circumstances, the very idea is preposterous. There are none to give employment to those who, in an advancing state of society, are liberated from the lowest drudgeries of life ; none to excite genius, or reward merit, none to confer dignity and elegance on

<sup>1</sup> Wakefield, vol.i. p. 290, note.

society ; to lead in the march of civilization ; to diffuse knowledge or dispense charity. That state of society which has a tendency to separate itself into two classes only, the rich and the poor, has, from the time of Bacon downwards, been reprobated by all whose opinions are deserving of regard ; but that in which poverty constitutes the sole class, is still more pernicious and unnatural. And thus it is wherever absenteeism universally prevails ; there wealth shuns the labour by which it is fed, and the industry by which it is distinguished : rigorously exacting all its dues, fancied or real, and returning none to those to whom they are as truly, though not as legally owing ; carrying off the products of the vintage of nature, even to the very gleanings, to a far country, and leaving the refuse to those who cultivate the soil and express the juice ; muzzling the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn, which is fed with the husks, and goaded to desperation.

(5.) But this abandonment, simply, is not all with which absenteeism stands charged. It substitutes, for neglected duties, positive wrongs of the deadliest character. Absent in the body, it is indeed ever present in the spirit of cruelty and oppression. Its very existence implies a train of evils, which have been for centuries past the most cruel scourges of the country : I mean the underletting system. Amongst these middlemen, as they are called, there may be, and no doubt are, men of high honour and humanity ; but such exceptions render the cruelty and extortion of the entire class the more conspicuous. The sacred bond which ought to unite the superior and the in-

ferior, the landlord and the tenant, is broken : mere mercenary connexions are all that remain, a thousand of which may be dissolved at once without costing a single thought. This is a system of which the middlemen, nay, very often many subordinate ranks of these carnivoræ, are the ministers<sup>1</sup>, whose sole possible motive is present gain, and whose conduct corresponds with it. The experimental labours of this class are highly beneficial to the whole body of landed proprietors ; they can calculate to a nicety how much and how long a little cultivator can endure ; and know the precise period when it is best to “ drive him.” They thus not only act for the absentee, but are a sort of pioneers for the rest of the landlords, and by constantly exercising their instruments of devastation, have certainly cleared the way for those enormously high rents, which, to the great discredit of too many of the proprietors, are extorted from the suffering peasantry of Ireland<sup>2</sup>. Here too is the principal cause of those

<sup>1</sup> “ Undertakers inured to tyranny and extortion.” (Bishop Woodward, *Argument, &c.* p. 17.)—See Reports on the State of Ireland, pp. 38, 590, &c.

<sup>2</sup> I cannot better preface a few subjoined proofs of this assertion, than in the words of a dignitary of the Church of Ireland, in a little work, entitled “ *Lachrymæ Hibernicæ*.” Speaking of the causes of the wretched poverty of Ireland, he thus expresses himself: “ We know here we touch a tender subject. We have observed how the Irish landlords started up in anger, in the house of commons, when it was hinted that their lands were let at too high a rate, and, of course, unless his insignificance secures him, the writer expects to meet his share of their reproach. Notwithstanding, he says, and he has the opinion of some of the ablest men of the nation to confirm it, that the lands of Ireland are, generally speaking, let at an exorbitant over-value.”—(*Grievances of Ireland*, p. 8.)

As this evil, too, is attributed to the “ principle of population,” which, in every attitude it assumes, and every dogma it delivers, is still the avowed enemy of the mass of mankind ; let the following proofs, which might be multiplied to any extent, show that the in-

minute and temporary lettings, so injurious to the soil, and for which such incredibly large sums are exacted<sup>1</sup>; and which contribute to keep so great a number of the peasantry in constant poverty and fluctuation. To the same source is to be attributed, I am persuaded, those exactions, cruelties, and “drivings,” to which that unhappy race are constantly subjected. The infection of cruel selfishness is to be traced to absenteeism; and once introduced, such, alas! is our nature, wherever interest is concerned, we are predisposed to take the contagion, which thus spreads like a leprosy through a whole country, and fills it with suffering, and sorrow, and destitution.

crease of the inhabitants simply, as increasing the competition for land, has little to do with the matter.

Edmund Spenser says, “The landlords there most shamefully rack their tenants.”—(State of Ireland, Works, vol. vi. p. 33.)

Dean Swift, “Rents, squeezed out of the very blood, and vitals, and clothes, and dwellings of the tenants, who live worse than English beggars.”—(View of the State of Ireland, Works, vol. vi. p. 159.)

Archbishop Boulter, “Here the tenant, I fear, has hardly ever more than one third for his share, and too often but a fourth or a fifth part.”—(Letters, vol. i. p. 292.) Hear this, ye great English monopolizing tenants, who tell your landlords none but a large farmer can pay them good rents!

Right Honourable John Fitzgibbon, At.-Gen. “The peasantry are ground down to powder by enormous rents.”—(Speech, 1787.)

“Exorbitant rents.”—(Gordon’s Hist. of Ireland, vol. ii. p. 241.)

“Exorbitant rents.”—(Newenham’s Inquiry, &c. p. 15.)

“Exorbitant rents.”—(Argument for the Support of the Poor; Dr. Woodward, p. 15.)

“Exorbitant rents.”—(Curwen, Observations on the State of Ireland, vol. ii. 32.)

“Exorbitant rents.”—(First Report on the State of Ireland, 1825, p. 38.) See pp. 59, 307, 413, 414, 638, &c. &c.

“It is an undoubted fact that, as landlords, they exact more from their tenants, than the same class of men in any other country.”—(Wakefield, Account of Ireland, vol. ii. p. 795.)

<sup>1</sup> Conacres, which are generally let up to “ten guineas an acre.”—Report of the Select Committee on the State of Ireland, i. p. 50; ii. p. 414; iv. p. 638, &c.

(6.) That the extreme poverty thus introduced, with its unhappy associate, idleness, are invariably connected with ignorance, and too often with crime, needs little proof. I would have added to these melancholy consequences, those commotions which have so frequently agitated the country, with the guilt of which, at least negatively, absenteeism stands chargeable; only that I shall probably again touch upon this point hereafter.

(7.) But, to pass over many of the minor evils of absenteeism unnoticed, let us, lastly, show its character in a still more awful point of view—namely, its heartless conduct in times of general sickness and distress, which are but too common in Ireland, and, in no slight degree, attributable to this, its unnatural desertion<sup>1</sup>. Such was, doubtless, the case in the late dreadful fever in Ireland. Its historians record, amongst other circumstances which occasioned it, “the high price of land, artificially created by land-jobbers,” (the middle people previously alluded to, the accomplices of absenteeism,) “and the vast income drawn from the country by absentees, THE DEADLIEST FOES OF IRELAND. These are causes, amongst many others, which have reduced countless numbers to want, and converted a considerable part of our population into mendicants<sup>2</sup>.” Another medical report in the same work says, “The great proprietors of extensive estates in the neighbourhood and in every part of the country are absentees, with the exception of one or two. They draw out of this remote and impoverished

<sup>1</sup> Drs. Baker and Cheyne, *Account of the Fever in Ireland*, vol. ii. pp. 98. 125.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 405.



country" (round Tralee) "about £160,000 a year, at a rough calculation; of which not one shilling is spent in it—*hinc illæ lachrymæ*<sup>1</sup>." Surely this physician can never have read Professor Macculloch! But the subject, alas! is too serious to blend up with a laugh at political economy. These desertions necessarily caused that want of employment<sup>2</sup>, that poverty<sup>3</sup>, and that despondency and dejection of mind<sup>4</sup>, which are declared to have been the predisposing causes of the infection; the last of which rendered it, it is said, almost invariably fatal<sup>5</sup>. The resident gentry, indeed, covered themselves with immortal honour on the trying occasion<sup>6</sup>: they very generally gave "employment as far as possible to all the poor that applied for it, and fed multitudes who must otherwise have perished<sup>7</sup>;" but these, alas! were few<sup>8</sup>, and often at great distances<sup>9</sup>, and in that case the suffering was greatly heightened<sup>10</sup>. Thus, it appears, that absenteeism was often the direct cause of the calamity, which it always aggravated.

Leaving, then, wholly out of our consideration the more apparent and constantly operating evils of this pest of Ireland; that mass of poverty which is created, that distress which is unrelieved; that idleness which is unemployed; that ignorance which is uninstructed; together with all the crime and suffering from which

<sup>1</sup> Drs. Baker and Cheyne, Account of the Fever in Ireland, vol. ii. p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 99; vol. ii. pp. 17, 38, 41, 140, 145, 158, 165.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 38, 65, 71, 79, 87, 93, 165, &c. &c.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 98, 125.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 76, 89, 95, 157.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 100.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 76, 125, 138.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. 338.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 35.



such a state of things is inseparable ; what is, lastly, its conduct in regard to its victims in the extremity of nature, when disease is added to poverty, multiplying its sorrows in a ratio of which wealth can have no adequate conception? when the desertion, as it respects such sufferers, is irreparable and final? when those last duties, which the humane heart will not allow itself to perform by proxy, are not performed at all? In that awful season, from every quarter of Ireland, there came from the death-bed — bed, did I say! from the scanty straw which spread the cold ground in many a temporary shed<sup>1</sup>; in such as which, were

<sup>1</sup> “ A volume might be filled with instances, in proof of the distress occasioned by this visitation of fever, amongst a people already exhausted by the privations consequent on want of employment, and scarcity of food.—Fever huts : these were wretched structures of mud or stone, not exceeding four or five feet in height, erected at the road sides, or in the corners of fields, for the purpose of receiving persons attacked with fever, either members of a family, removed there for the purpose of preventing an extension of sickness, or wretched wanderers in search of food and employment, thus compelled to struggle with a formidable disease on the damp ground, with little covering but the miserable clothing worn by day, and scarcely protected from the inclemency of the weather by the shed of straw or boughs, which formed the roof of this wretched habitation.”—(Drs. Baker and Cheyne, vol. i. pp. 63, 64.)

Dr. O’Leary says, in his report inserted in the above work, “ Three or four patients have literally died in the streets, or by the side of the ditches, for many were obliged to sleep in the fields. *Fever huts* were erected on the passage to the church, either on or near all the public roads, and on the fair field. I have gone into a hut, where, owing to the lowness of the entrance, I could only feel the pulse of the four inmates, a father and three children of the name of Staunton. There were also two grown-up daughters, who were obliged to remain several nights in the open air, not having room in the hut till the father died ; when the stronger of the two girls forced herself into his place. On the road leading to Cork, within a mile of this town, I visited a woman of the name of Vaughan, labouring under typhus ; on her left lay a child very ill, at the foot of the bed another child, just able to crawl about, and on her right the corpse of a third child, who had died two days previously, and which the unhappy mother could not get removed.”—(*Ibid.* vol. i.

the pampered beast of many a proud absentee put for a single night, he would probably make the air ring

p. 65.) Numbers of cases succeed, quite of as distressing a kind. I shall only further quote another from Mr. Nolan: "Ellen Fagan, a young woman, whose husband was obliged, in order to seek employment, to leave her almost destitute, in a miserable cabin, with three children—caught the disease," in having, poor as she was herself, administered charity to another; "and from the terror and alarm created in the neighbourhood, was with her three children deserted, except that some persons left a little water and milk at the window for the children, one about four, the other three years old, the third an infant at her breast. In this way she continued for a week, when a neighbour heard of her distress, and sent her a loaf of bread, which was left in the window. Four days after this he grew uneasy about her, and one night he prepared some tea and bread, and taking a female servant with him, set off to her relief. When he arrived, the following scene presented itself: in the window lay the loaf where it had been deposited four days previously; in one corner of the cabin, on a little straw, without covering of any kind, lay the wretched mother actually dying; her infant dead by her side for want of that sustenance she had not to give; on the floor lay two children, to appearance dying also of cold or hunger; at first they refused to take anything, and he had to force a little liquid down their throats; in a short time they revived, and with the cautious administration of food, they recovered the effects of their suffering. The woman expired before the visitor left the house, who, I am happy to add, did not suffer from his humanity," (vol. i. p. 66.) I am irresistibly impelled to bring Mr. Malthus's doctrines to the touchstone of this awful scene. In order to support a wretched system of population, inevitably connected with, and indeed productive of, vice and suffering, matrimony, which Christianity declares "honourable in all," and his church pronounces necessary as well as "holy," is to be degraded into a selfish gratification, which, were it true, this uncovering of the nakedness of our common parent, Nature, exhibits a far greater indecency than it exposes. But further; to such who have not those "clear prospects" which not one poor man in a thousand has, it is denounced as "a clearly immoral act<sup>1</sup>," this partial morality, therefore, cuts him off from all that solace and assistance so necessary to a poor labourer under all circumstances<sup>2</sup>, but especially in those afflictions to which he is peculiarly exposed. When sufferings like those we have been describing befall such a man, when, without employment, or food, or health, he sinks the most wretched being in nature, what is it that this precious system recommends, upon principle, regarding him? "To the punishment of nature he

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay, p. 539.

<sup>2</sup> Report on Bettering the Condition of the Poor, vol. ii. p. 325. See Dr. Halley on the Marriages of the Poor.

with his reproofs; but which were crowded with patient and grateful sufferers, with the infected, the

should be left, the punishment of severe want !” The absentees follow this advice, and most exactly do as they “should” in so leaving him. Poor Ellen and her children were so “left.” “All parish assistance should be rigidly denied, and *if* the hand of private charity be stretched forth in relief, the interests of humanity require that it should be administered very sparingly. She should be taught to know that the laws of nature, which are those of God, had doomed her and her family (‘but these’ infants, ‘what have they done?’) to starve for disobeying their repeated admonitions—she has no claim of right on society for the smallest portion of food!” I refer the reader to the entire passage. I have quoted far enough, and only changed it agreeably to “the rubric,” by substituting she for he. As to the most helpless and friendless of human beings, deserted children, the same system says, “The infant is, comparatively speaking, of no value to society, as others will immediately supply its place<sup>1</sup>.” Jesus Christ, however, was no political economist, and has, therefore, fairly warned those who are for giving such “fair notice” to others, that it were better for us that a millstone were hanged about our necks, and that we were cast into the depths of the sea, than we should act upon any such principle<sup>2</sup>. Scripture, nevertheless, is quoted upon the occasion, and the second commandment has a gloss put upon it<sup>3</sup>, which, were it true, would make revealed religion “a reproach and a hissing,” even in the estimation of heathenism. But God himself expressly clears his word and providence of such an unrighteous interpretation, by an oath!<sup>4</sup> and sound criticism, as well as divinity, utterly reject it.—(See Bishop Jeremy Taylor on the second commandment, Works, vol. ix. p. 36, and vol. iii. p. 66; and Dr. Paley’s sermon on the same passage.) The comment of Mr. Malthus differs from these totally, and most critically coincides with that of the amiable Captain Blifil in Tom Jones<sup>5</sup>, as does the charity of his system with that of Parson Thwackum<sup>7</sup>. Strange is it, that what the great novelist invented as the keenest satire upon the most despicable of human characters, should be now taken up as true divinity and sound policy! Something, however, this system says about charity, and prides itself in so doing, as if it had made some important concession; but we reject its notion of duty quite as much as we do its doctrines, and deny that the rag with which it tries to cover its naked deformities, is of a piece with that luminous robe with which Christianity is invested. Where is it that we are exhorted to shut up our bowels of compassion, and steel our hearts against

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay, p. 540.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew, c. xviii. v. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel, ch. xviii. *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> Fielding, Tom Jones, book ii. c. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Essay, p. 540.

<sup>6</sup> Malthus, Essay, p. 543.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* book iii. c. 8.

dying, and the dead : from scenes like these, I say, there came a voice as audible as if it had been pealed forth in thunder : “ I—I, whose labour has supplied all your wants, and supported your grandeur ; contenting myself with the refuse, in order to satisfy

those whose sufferings have been occasioned or aggravated by a numerous family ? Nay, though we admit that the circumstances of the case and the character of the sufferer may be properly enough considered, still, show us the precept that authorises us in making merit the passport to our mercy. We defy such commentators to show us one passage to this effect, in the entire volume whose burden seems to be this divine virtue. On the contrary, hundreds might be instantly adduced in which so prudent and politic a maxim is expressly reprobated ; christian charity, if Christ may be allowed to expound it, is founded not in the perfections, but on the imperfections of our nature ; and appeals to the perfections of the Deity alone, whose mercies are represented to us for our imitation, as promiscuous and universal. We are not authorised to spurn the prodigal, nor to desert even the “ unthankful or the unholy.” We are not allowed to hesitate in assisting the necessities of our fellow-beings constantly and systematically ; nor to pause, in order to first ascertain how the misery which it is our duty to relieve was occasioned ; but, on the contrary, if we be touched with this divine principle, our minds will be directed to our own unworthiness ; and instead of uncharitably inquiring respecting the unhappy object, “ Did this man sin, or his father ? ” the language of our heart will be—“ Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of *our* forefathers ! ” Above all, instead of daring to strew doubts and difficulties in the way of this divine virtue, we shall further all endeavours to console the sufferings and relieve the afflictions of humanity, whether national or individual, public or private, with all our mind, and soul, and strength. Utterly regardless of the sarcasms and the sophisms of the modern school, we shall, as far as in us lies, maintain the ancient glory of our country in this respect, and still further extend it, if it be in our power, even to unhappy Ireland : in doing this, we know we have nothing to fear, and least of all, doing too much. In the words of the godlike Bacon, being certain that “ charity, and charity only, admitteth of no excess. By aspiring to a similitude of God in goodness and love, neither man, nor angel, ever transgressed or shall transgress.” All this, however, I fear, is sufficiently absurd in the opinion of the economists, whose chief dogma has been forestalled long ago by our immortal bard, where he satirically exclaims,

“ Men must learn now with pity to dispense,  
For policy sits above conscience.”

your exactions, till even that failed me, and I sank — I was sick — and ye — DESERTED ME !” It is over ! Their victims have given up the ghost, unheeded and even unheard ; and how should it be otherwise ? Pursue the absentee into the scenes in which he is expending, in a single night, what would have delivered one of his dependent families from destruction, and which another description of absentees are receiving. Can it be expected that the last sigh with which the famished wretch takes leave of life should be allowed to untune, for a moment, the “ Italian trills” which ravish his refined ears ? or that he should withdraw for an instant the eager gaze with which he pursues “ the gesturous dance,” to bestow it, or a thought with it, on the convulsive death-throes he has occasioned ? or that the stake should be withdrawn from the hazard-table, to throw it into the scale, trembling with the fate of numbers, which it would cause to mount up to life and happiness ? The very idea is laughable !

(8.) Such, then, is the last wrong absenteeism inflicts, because it is the last it has in its power to inflict ; the connexion is thus terminated, and it will be happy for those who have had in their life-time their good things, thus obtained and thus employed, if the absenteeism is not eternal. I wish not to speak as an enthusiast in religion, which I am not ; but let it be recollected, that the sufferings so occasioned, and thus unrelieved, are not the phantasma flitting in the glooms of a distempered imagination. None can assert this. The nearer they are viewed, the more they seem to multiply and enlarge, till they heighten

into awful realities ; and whether regarded or not, those shadows are weaving the web of fate, and giving its eternal colour. If there be one jot of truth in Christianity, on this point it is perfectly clear, it absolves no one from the duties of humanity, and least of all, the wealthy. Whether it be, as is so warmly contested, a system of faith or of works, here there can be no controversy. Whatever difference of opinion there may be, as to some of its mysteries, on this point it is awfully plain. And those who admit it to be an excellent sort of thing for the poor, rejecting its authority as it respects themselves, will do well to recollect that, in this particular, its dictates are plainly those of reason, humanity, and policy. They may laugh at its denunciations touching another world, but if these things are suffered to proceed unredressed, the vengeance of outraged humanity will again have to be braved in this, as it has too often been already.

But to return ; for a full proof of the misery absenteeism inflicts, by occasioning and heightening the sufferings sustained by the population of Ireland in these too frequently recurring periods of general sickness and distress, I refer to Drs. Baker and Cheyne's valuable work, from which I have made but few extracts, not wishing to obviate the necessity of the reader's consulting it for himself. To this authority may be added, that of the several voluminous official reports more recently put forth, on the state of Ireland ; in which almost all the witnesses describe the various evils absenteeism inflicts, with, however, one exception, to which allusion will be



made hereafter, as forming a species of evidence perfectly original and unique — “none but itself can be its parallel.”

(9.) I would not be meant to intimate, in any of the preceding remarks, that absenteeism is universal, or that it is always criminal. There are some who have larger interests to protect, or duties to perform in other parts of the empire, as well as many resident landlords, who spend their revenues amongst those from whom they are derived ; and were it not for these latter, it would not be possible that the absentees could abstract from that country the sums they at present do. The conduct of these real friends of their country is most conscientious, and their charity, on the afflicting occasion just alluded to, was beyond all praise. But those who are thus fulfilling the important duties of their station, have their residence rendered far more undesirable by the unnatural desertion of those who act otherwise. The total neglect of their duty by the latter, so far from being excused by the due discharge of it on the part of the former, is thereby rendered still more flagrant. It would require the entire natural resources of Ireland to be devoted to her by those from whom they are imperiously demanded, to effect her permanent advancement ; every individual, therefore, who continues to subtract any part of these, so far injures the country, and destroys its prospect of advancement ; and let such recollect, that if absenteeism is not universal, it is not owing to their conduct or their example<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, however, I have gone too far in saying that *no* relief,



§ VI. (1.) But new lights have burst upon us on this important subject; the enlarged and philanthropic views of generations of the patriots and legislators of Ireland are all at once deemed “darkness visible;” books have been composed and lectures delivered, to prove that absenteeism is no evil whatsoever, and parliament itself has called forth and published this opinion. Let us, therefore, examine a little this strange position, which contradicts without the least ceremony the common sense and feelings of mankind, and is, most unhappily, at variance with the bitter experience of the country in question. I shall not contend the matter with a system which, though all head, has no heart, and “not Hercules himself could knock out its brains, for it has none;” but address myself to the plain sense of my readers.

Let us, in order to see this subject more clearly, present it as individually exemplified. Ireland is, strictly speaking, an agricultural country; even its linen manufacture, as fabricated from produce grown by the peasants on the patches they occupy, partakes,

in this dreadful period of universal distress, was, on the faith of the representations which were made of its existence, seconded by personal applications, administered to their suffering and dying dependents, by these absentees. But I had just risen from the attentive perusal of Drs. Baker and Cheyne’s history of that afflicting period; and whoever will follow me in that task will excuse me in having come to that conclusion. Candour, however, obliges me to say that it is not strictly correct. “In the calamitous summer of 1822,” I find that “a subscription was made for the relief of the poor of a certain district, by the resident gentry, landowners, and clergy. Application was made to the absentee proprietors, who annually abstracted from that country £83,000. Their subscriptions altogether amounted to eighty-three pounds<sup>1</sup>” I am perfectly willing to admit this interesting fact, while thus recording the evils of absenteeism.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Limerick’s Speech, p. 74. (June 10th, 1824.)

in some sort, of that character. Let us imagine, then, this agricultural population, as represented by a single farmer, under a single landlord, and that landlord an absentee; and not to confuse the subject by long and needless definitions about rent, value, &c., which add not a particle of practical information to the man that attends to them, let us suppose the farmer to be what was called a metayer, or, in other words, one who gives to the owner a certain proportion of the produce of his cultivation in kind, for the usufruct of the land he occupies; and this every farmer does, either directly (as is still the case in many parts of the continent, and almost universally throughout Italy,) or indirectly, when he pays to the landlord the estimated value of his share in money, having then to sell produce for that purpose, a far more convenient, though perhaps less precise, mode of adjusting their respective interests. I ought to have premised, that as the wants agricultural labour supplies are not the only necessities of human beings, especially as society advances in civilization; so it is wisely ordained that agricultural labour does not demand, nor can it employ, an entire population: a certain, and indeed a large proportion are left to answer other necessary demands, and pursue different avocations. Reverting then to the Irish farmer: he has a large family; his crime, according to the new school, and too often in the estimation of his landlord, who is positively so blinded by interest as not to see that it is to this very cause (the prolificness of human beings) that the increasing value of his product is solely owing. But let this pass. Part of the farmer's family remain totally idle,

or the whole partially so, and have to experience the penury and suffering which idleness inevitably entails, and for precisely this reason:—the landlord is an absentee, and is, for example, in Naples. His share of the produce (and we have seen how large a one it is in Ireland) is transmitted to him thither, at all events it leaves the island for that special purpose, the farmer having little or nothing else to send; and this is all that concerns the argument, which has not the least to do with the various exchanges or profits, to which his produce is subjected after it leaves his own shores, till, either in bulk or value, it reaches his landlord. Ireland, therefore, is not only deprived of the produce which its suffering population too often stands in absolute need of, but of that profitable labour which the consumption of it by the landlord in his own country would necessarily call into action. To the landlord it may, perhaps, appear “all the same,” though I think this will admit of reasonable doubt in the up-shot. He obtains by these remittances the services of the Neapolitan coachmaker, tailor, shoemaker, servant, or whatever assistance he may stand in need of; but who does not see that, if he stayed in the country from which his revenues are derived, part of the farmer’s family would be his coachmaker, tailor, shoemaker, servant; in a word, be employed in rendering him all the assistance which wealth demands from labour, and for which labour is remunerated? Political economy pronounces this to be all one, or rather decides in favour of absenteeism; but common sense, confirmed by the melancholy experience of ages,

proves the difference to be that between a population comfortably sustained and well employed, and consequently advancing in prosperity and happiness, and one idle and wretched, always in want, and often on the verge of starvation, and sinking into still lower depths of misery and degradation.

Even were these absentees to return and become residents, still retaining their unnatural predilection for articles of foreign industry, that part of the revenues expended upon such would, I contend, be lost in great measure to such a country as Ireland, which, having little or nothing to export but provisions, with a half-fed and less than half-employed population, would be starved, as well as impoverished, just so far as this practice prevailed. The Dublin Society proved, by an exact calculation, that they might maintain twenty poor families for a whole year, with the quantity of beef and mutton which they exported for buying a lady's head-dress<sup>1</sup>. It may be true, perhaps, that as many families, though perhaps not quite so poor, were fed at Brussels by the importation of this cap ; but on no imaginable ground can such a change be "all one" to the twenty poor Irish families ; nor can political economy prove it to be so, on any other ground than that of a citizenship of the world, upon which principle I have heard, of late, many of the notions of that "science, falsely so called," boldly avowed and defended, and which, I begin to think, is the *stultifera navis* in which the whole school are embarked. If it be so, it is high time they should hoist their true co-

<sup>1</sup> Spirit of Legislation, p. 248.

lours: they are not British; nor will Britain much longer harbour those who show her no preference, excepting where they have to be paid and victualled.

(2.) But further: if the modern notion concerning absenteeism is true as it regards Ireland, it is true as it respects all other countries: if it be true at all, it is true universally. Let us apply it then, for a moment, to Great Britain. Suppose the same rage for deserting the country were to prevail here that does there (it does indeed prevail to a certain degree, and is so far, I maintain, pernicious and productive of more of our national difficulties than many are aware of, or, knowing, will acknowledge); bearing in mind that the ownership of landed property, in almost all cases, practically resolves itself into the right of receiving annually a certain share of the produce of lands cultivated by others, it is plain that, if the landlords of Great Britain were to desert the island universally, it would not matter a jot, as it respects the point at issue, if such absent owners were instantly, one and all, metamorphosed into foreigners: the mere circumstance of their having been born and registered in this country cannot, surely, affect the question. If Ireland, then, is not impoverished by absenteeism, neither would England and Scotland; and, if expending the owner's share of the produce out of the country does not impoverish it, the united kingdom would not be a whit the poorer, if every acre of its surface, and all under its surface, were the fee-simple of foreign landlords,—French, for instance,—never visiting this country, but expending their share of its products in giving employment and its remuneration to the inhabitants of

Paris or Versailles. Nor, on the other hand, would England be at all the richer if the entire kingdom of France were owned by resident British subjects, and its whole rental annually transmitted to and disbursed in this country, in addition to its own. These instances are, of course, meant to exhibit the subject in its utmost possible extent: there are, it is admitted, various degrees in which this evil prevails, according to which its consequences will be more or less obvious and important. A disease may be troublesome without being dangerous, or it may prostrate the strength without immediately threatening life, or it may become fatal at length, merely from its long continuation: just so is it with absenteeism; it may prevail to the extent it does in England, when only a certain number, twenty thousand, suppose, of our gentry, are dissipating their property abroad, in the vortex of French fashion, or the sties of Italian corruption; and these may not, perhaps, throw more than a hundred thousand English artisans out of employment, lowering the condition and, of course, raising the national burdens laid upon the rest; while in Ireland, perhaps, at least a fourth (the estimate has often been a third) of its landed rental is thus withdrawn; but, just as it prevails in any country, just so far is that country degraded and beggared.

(3.) Nor are the evils of absenteeism confined, as it respects Ireland, within its own shores. One of a great and increasing magnitude, as it regards this country, shall be here mentioned. Whether the absentee landlords reside in England, or, as is often the case, in other parts of Europe, still England is



the country to which the produce of Ireland has to be exported, to make up the rents of these absentees ; occasioning not only great suffering to the people of that country, by abstracting more of the necessities of life from them than can frequently be spared, and where larger portions of them ought always to be enjoyed, but great mischief in this, by inundating the markets of England with cattle, and, soon after the Union, with corn ; and, consequently, inflicting on the little freeholders and farmers of England the most serious injury—a class of men which I again differ with the political economists in thinking ought to be upheld, for reasons I shall state hereafter. Waiving this consideration for the present, I shall point out a last evil as consequent on absenteeism, a loss of that which the class of writers against whom I am directing these remarks, the economists, ought fully to appreciate, for they are perpetually dwelling upon it, as though it were the sole consideration under the sun : I mean capital.

(4.) The capital of an entire country is created and accumulated by slow degrees, and in a course of years : and herein it differs most materially from those individual fortunes or capitals which are often rapidly obtained, and which are then too frequently merely the transfer of property from one person to another. But, in speaking on this point, a favourite subject in political economy, I shall not presume to offer a precise definition of the term capital, but merely state what I mean by it, namely, property accumulated beyond present consumption, and created principally, as Locke has observed, by labour. But



how, nationally speaking, property can be progressively accumulated, when so little labour, comparatively speaking, is demanded, and when that little is so inadequately remunerated as scarcely to leave the bare means of existence, it would be difficult to imagine. That Ireland has lamentably little accumulated capital, nationally considered, is not any matter of surprise, but rather, how she can possibly supply the perpetual drains which are made upon her : the possibility is, it is true, demonstrated, she does supply them ; and how, is seen too well, in the wretchedness of her people. As rational would it be for a farmer to dream of enriching his fields by carting off all their produce, and returning nothing to the ground ; or a physician to restore his patient from an atrophy by starvation and depletion, as to suppose Ireland can accumulate capital while a long list of absentees are not only depriving her of all the means by which she might be enriched, but constantly wresting from her, in undue quantities, the very necessities of existence. I leave it to modern writers, who dilate so much on the power of capital, to estimate the injury Ireland suffers from absenteeism, which has long deprived her of it, or the possibility of accumulating it.

(5.) Much is said about the great benefits which would accrue from the introduction of manufactures into the distressed parts of that country. “ But if capitals sufficient to establish, or extend manufactures, be not accumulated, which can scarcely be expected during the continuance of so great a drain of money ; if the demand for labour do not keep pace

with the increase of people, which in such case it may not, if industry be overstocked; there will undoubtedly be reason to apprehend a recurrence of those disturbances which have already proved so injurious to Ireland<sup>1</sup>." Such is the opinion of Mr. Newenham on this important subject<sup>2</sup>.

(6.) To apply what has been said to the immediate subject of this treatise. It will be seen, from the preceding facts, and the necessary inferences drawn from them, that there is the strongest ground for asserting that Ireland, instead of negating the theory of human increase advanced in this work, confirms it in all its main positions, in the most striking manner. It adds another irrefragable proof of the principle which lies at its foundation, the prolificness of a state of poverty and privation<sup>3</sup>. Even in that important particular, in which it seems to deviate from what I conceive to be one of the effects of the law of population, by exhibiting a great increase of numbers without a corresponding amelioration of condition, it so differs as to confirm the general truth of that benevolent rule of

<sup>1</sup> Newenham, *An Inquiry into the Progress, &c.* pp. 170, 171.

<sup>2</sup> The introduction and extension of manufactures (a favourite proposition with some in behalf of Ireland) is, therefore, rendered impossible by absenteeism. It is difficult to imagine how they could be introduced and encouraged without either capital or demand, to both of which that evil is fatal. But even were it not so, it is not exactly the sort of remedy that a friend of the empire at large would wish to see applied, had he his choice. Unless the market for our fabrics could be very considerably extended, which does not seem very probable, the fabrics of Ireland would have to supplant those of England; in which case poverty and employment would only change hands. The "immense manufacture" to which Montesquieu refers, seems most adapted to the condition and wants of Ireland of all others; of which more hereafter.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Watkinson expressly attributes the fecundity of the Irish to this cause.—(*Phil. Survey of the South of Ireland*, p. 147.)

nature, constituting it one of those exceptions which prove its correctness.

I must repeat, therefore, in reference to that country, that when the population was not a fifth of its present number, all the evils now attributed to a surcharge of inhabitants existed, and even in a greater degree than they do at present ; that, large as has been the increase of the inhabitants since that period, so far from the increase of its edible products having fallen short (which is the real consideration), the latter has very far surpassed the former ; and that the want of employment generally, and of the wealth which labour generates, is plainly attributable to the constant subtraction of so vast a portion of the natural wealth of the country by absentees, who, far different to such a withdrawal upon mercantile principles, make no return whatsoever. Hence the desertion of those whose residence would create those avocations which diffuse wealth wherever they are pursued, keeps down the mass of the people in a state of the lowest poverty,—a state, I repeat, the most favourable of all others to human prolificness. Were the wealth which mankind, under equal circumstances, always create in proportion to their numbers, allowed to remain in the country, employment would be created, and employment (to say nothing concerning its moral effects) would confer and diffuse affluence, and affluence would introduce those sedentary avocations, those comforts and indulgences approaching to luxury, and often terminating in it,—in fine, that general ease and enjoyment, the concomitants of riches, which are always diffused in a community, if fairly dealt with, in proportion to

its numbers. Every step of this progress would, while increasing the wealth, diminish the natural prolificness of the country; by means totally opposite to “the checks” of the contrary system, and agreeable to a law of nature, which forms that self-adjusting, sacred equipoise by which she proportions her numbers to her means of sustentation. Her laws are those of benevolence, but when they are constantly withstood, she works no miracles to counteract the misrule of mankind, and consequently does not suspend those laws in respect to Ireland, which are in constant operation elsewhere. Ireland is not overpeopled: she is prolific; but that prolificness is attributable to the desertion of those who charge it upon her as a crime. She is poor and wretched.

§ VII. Differing thus widely in regard to the disease of Ireland, with those whose principle I am opposing, it is no wonder that our remedies are diametrically opposite. To commence with the consideration of theirs; they are, as far as I have been able to collect them, principally these:—

1. The expatriation of a number of the present inhabitants.

2. Clearing the country of others by the engrossment of farms.

3. Giving the people a taste for superior living.

4. An ecclesiastical confiscation.

(1.) The first of these notable expedients, patronised as it is, it requires but few words to expose. The disorder of Ireland, as before shown, has been of long continuance; and, if it had been one to be cured

by such a remedy as this, it would have been removed long since. I again refer the reader to Archbishop Boulter's letters, written a century ago, and several other works of that period ; extracts of which may be found in " Newenham's Inquiry concerning the Population of Ireland," for evidence of the extensive emigrations that formerly took place ; when it will be fully seen that, were the remedy desirable, we have no chance whatever of applying it, in reference to the relative numbers, in a degree equal to that in which it was tried, above a hundred years ago, and thenceforward for at least half a century. The disposable resources of the country cannot make up the depletive prescription of our political quacks,—thank God, this once, for our poverty ; otherwise the whole empire would have been dosed with their panacea on many an emergency, and its vital strength, long ere this, prostrated without hope of recovery. It is hard to acquit of the imputation of either ignorance or cruelty, the proposal of applying a sum of money in sending a number of inhabitants out of the country on the plea of inadequate provision, which, properly applied, would bring into cultivation wastes sufficient to sustain a far greater number than it could transport ; securing thereby not only an increase in the provisions of the country, but encouraging, to a like extent, every other branch of its industry, and making a permanent and inexhaustible addition to its capital and wealth. In a word, whatever is to cure the distress of Ireland, migration is not the remedy, simply for these three reasons : 1. It is but a temporary expedient on the acknowledged principles of those

who would adopt it. Those who hold the modern notion on population, the superfecundity of the human race, in resorting to this, are knowingly exhausting the resources of the country for no manner of purpose whatsoever ; wearying her, like Sisyphus, in fruitlessly labouring against an irresistible law of nature, which strengthens in its operations precisely in the proportion in which it is counteracted. These gentlemen talk confidently of the pressure of population in all directions, and that it invariably rushes in wherever there is a “vacuum,” and finds, like water, its own level ; and still they propose a plan for our relief, precisely as wise, on their own principles, as though an engineer, in order to build the pier of a bridge, should set his hands a-pumping without having constructed, or being able to construct, a coffer-dam. This objection, therefore, is fatal to the scheme, even according to their own notions. But, 2. It is demonstrably a totally worthless remedy, in its having been tried largely and long, and having wholly failed. 3. If it had not been tried at all, and were there any the least reason to believe it would succeed, the disposable revenue of the country would not suffice to carry the plan into effect on a scale sufficiently large to answer the purposes contemplated, its advocates themselves being the judges as to the extent to which it should be adopted.

But, as this notable proposition is now brought forth, not only as it regards Ireland, but even England, and is at once to prove the truth of the theory of population which I oppose, as well as to become the palliative (cure none suppose it can ever be) of those



evils which it fixes upon God and nature, I shall dwell a little longer on this point generally, though I have already elsewhere given it a distinct consideration.

(2.) Without adverting, in these pages, to the identity of human origin, or the region which, as a profane writer of antiquity remarks, is, in the first glimpses which history affords, presented to us as fully peopled, and from whence diverged, as from a common centre, those various tribes of the human family, that have since spread over various parts of the earth ; I shall just mention an argument which is discussed in the work so frequently alluded to, where it is shown, that though it was owing to the migratory propensities of the human race, that the earth became peopled, still it was to the ultimate repression of that habit, either by a voluntary or compulsory settlement, that they found themselves conducted through advancing degrees of civilization to prosperity and happiness ; their numbers still multiplying and adding, at every augmentation, fresh stores of abundance, as well as new accessions of moral and intellectual wealth. Limited to a certain territory, each community found its confines to be the boundaries of increasing happiness. That salient source of all human prosperity, individual or national, population, no longer discharging itself into some distant void, now flowed back upon "the shallows and the miseries," which it had previously left exposed, every reflux wave expanding and deepening, not the ocean of vitality merely, but the abyss of the Divine bounty, the depth and breadth of which have as yet never been fathomed,



and we humbly presume it is given to no political economist to explore. The "scattering of mankind over the face of the earth" may be distinctly traced to their animal propensities, to their sloth and ignorance, operated upon by necessity; their numbers having increased agreeably to the law previously developed, that necessity called forth their intellectual faculties, rendered them stationary, introduced the institutions and the arts of social existence; and, in a word, created the immeasurable distance between savage and civilized man. Having elsewhere pursued this argument in detail, and connected it with its historical evidences, I shall only now observe, generally, that nothing can be more clear than that the great work of planting the nations was not performed when the earth was full of inhabitants, but, on the contrary, when it was a comparative void: not by nations whose numbers were the greatest, but the fewest and most scattered; in a word, not by those who had a real necessity to migrate, but by those whose ignorance taught them so to suppose, and whose barbarism made them fit instruments for the purpose, rendering them insensible of regrets or solitudes, either respecting the seats they left, or those to which chance directed their course. It was a work performed in ages of ignorance, or in times of strife and oppression, though the results have been so transcendently great. Those engaged in it, like the husbandman, often went forth weeping, bearing precious seed; it was reserved for posterity to gather the copious sheaves and rejoice in the abundant harvest.

In conformity with this view of the subject is the

fact, that, as the population of the different nations has increased, the necessity of these wanderings has diminished. I speak this advisedly, and in defiance of the information, or, I would rather say, the more formidable ignorance, of all the migration committees upon earth. I do not mean to say, but that many soul-stirring occasions, many powerful impulses, still may, and certainly will, carry numbers from every country to distant climes, even “to the farthest verge of the green earth;” or that such impulses may not be commissioned to effect some peculiar and important purposes of Divine Providence; or that there are not circumstances which demand such ejections on a principle of policy and humanity; but I deny, in behalf of a highly fertile, but imperfectly cultivated country,—I deny, in behalf of those feelings which endear to a grateful people their native seats and nearest connexions,—I deny, in the name of the strength and majesty of the empire—and, as I trust I shall make manifest, in that of truth itself, that the wholesale deportations, now contemplated, are necessary—that they are otherwise than unnatural, impolitic, and cruel. On these consequences I shall not dwell at present, but shall merely add, that if we follow the dictates of nature, and take with us the lights of human history, we shall doubtless arrive at safe conclusions. We shall find, that the main instruments in these colonizing migrations were barbarism and oppression; their periods those “times of ignorance which God winked at,” and rendered subservient to his benevolent purposes: those purposes accomplished, that veil of ignorance which seemed as effectually to conceal the

inexhaustible bounties of Providence from their benighted eyes, as it does from those of our political economists, was drawn aside, and the bosom of Nature, in all its loveliness and sufficiency, was bared to all her children. It has been already said, and indeed often repeated, that, as human beings have increased, their condition has been ameliorated; it must, however, be added, that, under more auspicious circumstances, the ties of kindred and social affection, and of attachment to country, so dear to all generous minds, have become strengthened and rooted in the very fibres of the heart. To tear them thence would too often be to leave an aching void which no after scenes of life could fill, and least of all those most of them would have to encounter. But in the divine economy, in these periods there are no such expedients dictated; Providence acts not by a system of cruel contrarieties; the desire of expatriation (excepting under perverse mismanagement), and its necessity, cease together; while the feelings of patriotism, fed by all the charities of life, and which it ought to be the care of all governments to cherish, rise in the deepest hostility to the proposition, and identify it with a penal infliction, in shame and suffering only short of ignominious death.

To apply the preceding remarks to the subject before us. When Europe, by far the most densely peopled, though perhaps the least fertile quarter of the globe, had probably not a twentieth part of its present inhabitants, we find them (at least in those parts which were the scantiest of people) in perpetual motion and fluctuation. But now that its numbers, in its confined territory, amount to so many scores of

millions, how few, comparatively speaking, desert their country? Meantime that they even now occupy, or adequately cultivate its surface, none will be found to assert. Malte-Brun intimates that, managed as at present, its soil would afford food enough for a thousand millions of inhabitants<sup>1</sup>; a calculation far within any I have ever seen, which take for their basis agricultural data. How many additional millions this kingdom would sustain, not with diminished, nor yet with stationary comforts and accommodations merely, but with as large an accession to their plenty and prosperity as to their numbers, I shall not again inquire. In the mean time, the idea of sending numbers of our fellow-subjects to distant regions, in search of a precarious bread, is nothing less than a vestige of that ignorant barbarism, which the principle I am opposing is making a strong, but, I trust, a last and ineffectual effort to perpetuate: an expedient which has been often connected with injustice and violence, and which, in its very nature, must ultimately fail, when apparently the most necessary. Can it therefore be resorted to consistently with the dictates of sound policy, or reconciled with the permanent designs of an eternal Providence?

(3.) But if the scheme of thus transporting a certain number of its inhabitants is, in itself, revolting to us, the plan proposed by which it is to be put into execution, and the principle of determining those on whom the lot of being cast out of the country is to fall, heighten our feelings of hostility to it. Though no assistance whatsoever is to be afforded to such

<sup>1</sup> Malte-Brun, book xcv. p. 87.

whom a very little capital would elevate into a state of comfortable industry at home, adding permanently to the resources of the country, and which, as expended here, could not finally, no, nor presently, be lost; yet loans, it seems, are to be offered to such as will go out of the kingdom, which in many cases will be inevitably sacrificed, as well as themselves. But who are the description of persons who are to be thus tempted and assisted to leave our shores, the industrious or the idle? the able-bodied or the weak? the bees or the drones of society? This, it seems, our politicians have decided. Imagining the social edifice to be overloaded, they actually propose to remedy the evil by removing a part of its foundations!

(4.) Though these ideas are sufficiently absurd, they are neither new nor peculiar to any state of population. A philosopher of France, who may be quoted on either side the argument in which I am engaged, says, in his flippant manner, that there are countries in which a man is worth nothing, and others in which he is worth less than nothing: it passes at present for a proof of wisdom to pronounce this to be the predicament of a human being in almost every nation, and especially in our own; and the destiny of thousands is now to be decided by a pretty verbal antithesis. Mr. Malthus is yet plainer in his dogmas than Montesquieu, and boldly assures the honourable committee, that putting out of existence a thousand labourers here and there, would, nationally speaking, be an advantage<sup>1</sup>. Thank God, these notions are as absurd and impolitic as they are selfish and cruel. In whose

<sup>1</sup> Third Emigration Report, p. 324, § 3246.

estimation is it, let us ask, that a man is worth less than nothing? In that of his GOD? No! He values one such at far beyond the worth of the material world! But this sort of valuation is perfectly ridiculous in the ears of the political economist, who, in taking upon himself to regulate the population of time, regulates that of eternity, a business to which he is equally called, and for which he is quite as well qualified. But it is the privilege of his luminous theory which is to dictate the policy, and determine the worth, of human beings, to make no references to a Deity; and in'all his propositions regarding them, he can therefore console the statesman, as Mrs. Quickly did Sir John Falstaff, "Now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of GOD." Well, then, to forget GOD, and to argue the question on mere personal and selfish grounds:—In the first, and infinitely the most important, view of the subject, man is worth every thing to himself; and on what other than mere selfish considerations do those argue, who hold the contrary notion? He is worth every thing to the little circle by whom he is surrounded, who become all to each other just in proportion as they have nothing else; and who feel the links that bind their hearts together, the more indissoluble, in that they may have been cemented in the furnace of affliction. Have I, then, or any man, political economist or otherwise, any right to pronounce my fellow-creature of no value, because I cannot make it out to my satisfaction that he is of any to me? And, supposing I have come to this complacent conclusion, has not such a one the right of retorting the doctrine upon myself? and, if I am



disposed to act upon it, will he not ultimately appeal to his manhood, and fatally convince me of my error? Do not I deserve to be convinced of it the moment I am uttering the horrible idea? Let me endeavour, then, to learn, if I have never as yet known it, that it is not upon a principle of monopoly, but on that of a kind copartnership, that the Deity hath “given the earth to the children of men;” and that I have no more right to judge of the worthlessness of human beings, on a principle of cruel selfishness, than Cain had to act upon it<sup>1</sup>.

(5.) But it has pleased Infinite Wisdom, in pity to human weakness, to fortify the obligations of mankind, by invariably uniting them with their true interests. Hence, as it is our duty to love, and cherish, and value our fellow-men, it is plainly our advantage so to do. And, without re-entering upon the argument, that mankind are not merely equally necessary to each other as their number increases, but, owing to the peculiar wants which civilization creates and multiplies, that they become actually more so<sup>2</sup>, I shall now shortly examine the notion of the worthlessness of human beings, on a broad and general principle.

Our old-fashioned national economists calculated the wealth of the country as principally consisting of the number of its inhabitants<sup>3</sup>; in the new school, human beings still continue to be valued, but, as it respects

<sup>1</sup> “Every man must live! This argument, which has more or less weight with every man, in proportion to his humanity, appears to me to be unanswerable in regard to him who uses it.”—(Rousseau.)

<sup>2</sup> This is the case even in Ireland; where the population is the thinnest, the demand for labour is the least, and is, of course, the worst remunerated.—(See Report on the State of Ireland, Part 4th, p. 445, &c.)

<sup>3</sup> Sir Wm. Petty's Polit. Arithmetic, &c.



many of them, by a kind of negative series. The former, notwithstanding the sneers of the day, I think, is the true mode on every rational view of the subject. What, I would ask, is it, that creates that capital concerning the definition of which so great a stir is made, as to cause the thing itself to be nearly lost sight of?—Human labour. What then constitutes capital but men ; and furthermore, what can alone give value to capital, when created?—Men. The exceptions from that catholic law of nature which has constituted human exertion the condition of subsistence, whether those which wealth has absolved from the necessity of its observance, or “the act of GOD,” has rendered incapable of obeying it, are such as affect not the general principle, except to confirm it. In every stage of civilization, from the first rudiments of society to its most perfect state, mankind have been ever found necessary to each other, and consequently not personally only, but relatively valuable.

That this is not a mere theoretical view of the subject, I appeal to all ages and countries of the world. Mr. Malthus has told us (how erroneously will be elsewhere shown) that Greece was surcharged with inhabitants. Never, however, did its citizens regard the lowest, and infinitely the most numerous class amongst them, “redundant,” excepting when they conceived them to be, on particular emergencies, too formidable for their safety. On the contrary, they were constantly making predatory expeditions, one principal object of which was the seizure of men<sup>1</sup>, who were a profitable article,

<sup>1</sup> Mitford, History of Greece, vol. i. p. 182.

of sale amongst them. Xenophon, in his *Economics*, recommends an addition of twenty thousand slaves at once to those already in the state of Athens<sup>1</sup>, who, it is calculated by some, outnumbered the free-men about twenty to one<sup>2</sup>. Rome, in like manner, imported men from different parts of the world in vast numbers, at the very time when, were we to believe the theory I am opposing, she was already overwhelmed with people<sup>3</sup>. In England, likewise, during the feudal system, when men were personal property, *vastum hominum et rerum* on an estate, was, in the celebrated instrument *Magna Charta*, regarded as an equal injury to its owner. I dare say the serfs of Russia, appertaining to the great proprietors of that country, are still similarly estimated. As to the negroes in our sugar islands, I presume I hardly need to state that such is the manner in which they are regarded, namely, as valuable property. In Barbadoes there were, in 1820, 78,345 slaves, the island containing, it is said, 106,470 acres of land; giving a population, exclusively of the whites, far more than twice as dense as that of Ireland<sup>4</sup>. The proprietors of the island, meantime, complain, and, I dare say, very

<sup>1</sup> Hume says ten: but on reference to Xenophon, it will be seen, I think, that an additional ten thousand is mentioned, and that it is proposed they should be further increased to sixty thousand.—(See Boeckh's *Greece*.)

<sup>2</sup> See the authority for this proportion in Hume's *Essay on the populosness of ancient nations* (*Essays*, vol. ii. p. 230); and in Boeckh, who estimates the number of the slaves, compared with that of the citizens, including the whole free population, as 100 to 27, (vol. i. p. 52.)

<sup>3</sup> Montesquieu, *Causes of the Rise and Fall*, &c., ch. viii.

<sup>4</sup> See *Slave Population*, Parl. Papers, 1824, No. 424; Colquhoun's *Wealth*, &c.

truly, of bad times ; but, supposing the apostles of the emigration scheme were to send one of their missionaries to them, who should say to the Barbadoes planters, “Gentlemen, your distresses are great and increasing ; but the cause is plain enough, you are in this island overpeopled ; turn adrift some considerable proportion of your hands, and the greatest prosperity will certainly ensue.” Why, the proposal would be taken as pointblank proof of insanity. “These hands,” they would say, “though not so valuable and beneficial to us as might be wished, under existing circumstances, are nevertheless our capital ; to expel or destroy these is, indeed, a very simple proposal, but it is one which would complete our ruin. Whatever be our property, they constitute its principal part ; whatever our profits, they are necessary to realize them.” “Aye,” but suppose the theorist were to say of a number of the helpless children who are, doubtless, constantly rising in the colony, as it has already advised should be done here,—“at any rate desert these children, and thereby prevent an undue accumulation of people in future.” “No !” it would be replied, “these constitute our future stock.” “Well, but, at all events, you could ease your condition by saving the expense of any longer supporting those who, it is certain, can no longer be profitable to you, but must, in every sense of the word, be superfluous ; such as are rendered incapable of future labour, by hopeless disease or incurable accident, or who are worn out by age and infirmity.” “Yes,” they would reply indignantly, “we might so serve ourselves, it is true ; but we abhor the proposition,

if not those who make it: we leave such conduct to be recommended and practised by the political economists of England, upon their brethren the whites, if they dare. Bad as we are represented to be, there is not a slave-driver in the Indies that would not execrate the very idea of acting on such a principle."

(6.) Not to pursue the inquiry any further, we may conclude, without the fear of contradiction, that in no age or country of the world in which mankind have been held in bondage, and been the property of others, have they ever been deemed valueless. The question, then, presents itself in a very definite and simple form: does the condition of the labouring classes deteriorate as society advances in improvement? Do they sink in actual and individual value, just in proportion as they rise in the social scale? Can so disgraceful a question demand a reply in these days; did it ever require one? None can doubt but that, if all their rights and privileges were annulled, and the labouring classes of the community were again to become the living chattels of their superiors, they would, as before, be reckoned valuable to the latter; and if so, it will admit of no dispute, but that, as freemen, they are now worth more to the body politic than would be their aggregate value to private individuals, just in the same proportion as free labour is always more profitable and productive than compulsory. The most ancient of poets says,

"Jove fix'd it certain that the very day  
Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away;"

and the father of prose asserts the same thing<sup>1</sup>. But

<sup>1</sup> Herod., Terps., lxxviii.

our moderns, full of the wondrous improvement of the times, and of the vast advantages of free labour, in a national as well as individual point of view, would have us to believe, nevertheless, that the day which makes man a freeman takes all his worth away, nay, actually reduces him in value to less than nothing, and makes it a national object to get rid of him.

A subject of such infinite importance to human beings ought not to be hastily dismissed; let us, therefore, inquire to whom it is, constituted as society now is, that the least of these our brethren is thus utterly valueless, and worse. At a period when it seems to be the absurd and ruinous policy of too many to deal with the great national interests separately; and not only as distinct, but as adverse to each other, let us so far follow their pernicious example, as so to address them. First, then, I ask, ye agriculturists, who have, unhappily, as early converts to political economy, long acted upon the principle I am opposing, as far as you could, by engrossing farms, and degrading the lesser tenantry into labourers, and these again into paupers, and murmuring many of you that you are not allowed to desert the poverty which you have been active in creating;—I say, I ask you, whether there are too many mouths in the country at large for you to supply: on the contrary, whether all your representations and remonstrances do not imply the contrary, and establish the fact of an over-production in reference to the demand, or, in other words, to the number of the inhabitants at large? Do you think that a general thinning

of the people would serve you, or, if not, that we must quit a certain number of them in particular spots, just as you shall point them out, with a view to subserve your particular views and interests? Next, I would address my inquiry to the handicrafts and manufacturers: have ye too many human beings to supply with clothing, furniture, and all the other conveniences of life, of your fabrication; and would your business be benefitted, think ye, if the Emigration Committee could tithe your countrymen, who comprehend the vast majority of your customers, a few times over? That man, methinks, would have as slight a claim to common sense as to humanity, who should so argue. Your complaint is, that your markets are too confined, and your customers too few; and it is one, I fear, which will increase, or at least frequently return, while you are taught to seek relief as at present. Divided as your different kinds of labour are, the demand and supply of each necessarily finding their proper level, and being in all cases strictly reciprocal, it is obvious that the producer and consumer are identified. It is, therefore, a somewhat singular method of mending trade, to ship off a few hundred thousands of your best and surest customers.

(7.) All this is sufficiently absurd, yet such is the real fact: our agriculturists, our artisans, and our manufacturers, if they be of the illuminati, all concur in throwing their distresses, fancied or real, upon overflowing numbers, though, if you inquire of each particularly, you shall find that the notion is only held by them as it respects their own particular class; the

others, their customers, they pronounce to be too few. Thus, for example, a fraternity of tailors, in a town, complaining of dull trade, naturally lay it to the charge of too large a population. Supposing, then, the fates were to become propitious, and sever with their shears the vital thread of half the entire inhabitants, including, of course, a like proportion of themselves; would the latter, though diminished thus in numbers, have an additional stitch of work, seeing that their customers had disappeared in the like proportion? They know better. It is the size of the tailoring population of which they complain: they leave it to the political economists to apply the principle generally<sup>1</sup>.

Some, however, I am aware, argue most profoundly that it is poverty alone of which the country ought to be purged; as if poverty were not inherent in the constitution of human society, and as if, were it possible to eradicate it, that it were desirable: neither of which is the fact. Amongst all the ordinations of Providence, nothing is more certain, and, perhaps, could we see far enough into its dispensations, nothing more wise than its irreversible fiat, "the poor shall never cease out of the land." But, as to the question immediately before us; the redundancy even of these, in reference to our national industry, is, I think, very

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Malthus, indeed, talks that the prudential restraint, if generally adopted, "by narrowing the supply of human labour in the market, would, in the natural course of things, soon raise its price." The very proposition, common as it is to our political economists, contains a similar self-contradiction. Pray, would not the market of demand be narrowed in precisely the same ratio as the market of labour, by the general adoption recommended? The contrary supposition is too absurd to need notice.



fallaciously determined by many. The poor, we are not to forget, are consumers to the amount of their entire expenses; and, of the several millions which they cost the country, almost every fraction is redistributed amongst the industrious classes of the community; which we are not sure would be the case, at least to anything approaching the same proportion, were that sum retained by the wealthy, from whom it is now taken, or returned to them. No inconsiderable part of it would then, doubtless, find its way into the pockets of foreign artisans, or indeed, in numerous instances, be altogether disbursed abroad. True it is, that only a part of the rates expended in sustaining the poor is in the first instance expended in payment of labour; but it is not so clear a point in political economy, that this is an unmingled evil, as it is in other respects. If the market of labour is at present fully supplied, it is not quite certain but that throwing additional hands into it would be prejudicial. On higher motives, however, than mere interest can suggest, all relief should be rigidly confined to, and connected with labour; excepting in cases where the party to be relieved is incapable of rendering it: but it should be such labour as would in no case interfere with the demand for it now existing. But I am wandering from the point; and I would, therefore, simply repeat here, that even the circulation which the system of sustaining our poor occasions in articles of internal industry solely, could, I think, hardly be dispensed with, if either humanity, policy, or even safety, would warrant us in making

the experiment of transporting them, an expedient which has been recommended long ago.

(8.) Further: how does patriotism relish the proposal of these vast deportations of our countrymen? The defence and glory of the nation, once the first objects of all states, and especially of our own, have not, it may be hoped, become quite obsolete ideas. The occasions which called them forth have been too recent and too portentous to allow them, one would think, to be entirely forgotten. In the late period of trial, then, and a long and tremendous one it was, while the combatants trembled at each other's resources, courage, and perseverance, and the world looked on in fearful and agitating suspense as to the issue; then, I say, when England had, perhaps, for the first time, in her eventful history, to put forth her utmost strength for her preservation, (and, thank God! it sufficed,)—had she, I ask, ye politicians, too many arms raised in her defence, too many hearts engaged in her cause? I would rather ask the anti-populationists whether, if she had listened to their system, and had had fewer, she would have weathered the storm? But, forgetting the past, with all the load of gratitude it lays us under to the population of the empire, “now the hurly burly's done,” and England is reduced to a state approaching to exhaustion, partly owing to her long continued exertions, has she, I would ask the statesman, too many to sustain the load entailed upon her, or amongst whom to divide the accumulated demands which are perpetually made upon her resources? I trow not, and think such

should be the very last so to determine, for reasons which I shall not now particularize.

Lastly, I appeal to nature and to God, whether, in this country, human beings are superfluous. Let the thirty millions of uncultivated acres, out of the seventy-seven which these islands comprise, as well as those boundless unimproved "wastes of the ocean" by which they are surrounded, to use Lord Bacon's expression, finally answer this question. If you want food, therefore, here it is to be obtained in supplies that defy calculation; if you want labour, here it presents itself to an unlimited extent, and of the most practicable as well as beneficial kind. But our political economists, disgusted with proposals so obvious and natural, turn from them, like Naaman did from the prophet in contempt; and require some great and imposing remedies to be applied, some mysterious incantations to be pronounced, and cruel rites to be performed, in order to the relief of our country. Above all, it seems, we are now to seek relief in an expedient which has hitherto been regarded as one of the deepest of human punishments, and the most unequivocal proofs of the divine displeasure, the expulsion and final dispersion of part of the tribes of our Israel.

And who, let me again ask, is it proposed to send forth? — Helpless infancy? I believe not. Decrepit age and incurable disease? — Certainly not; we are hardly, as yet, prepared to remove the poor from our presence when debilitated by weakness and disease; as it is said was the practice of the Romans who exposed such in the isle of *Æsculapius*<sup>1</sup>. No. The

<sup>1</sup> *Suet.* in *Claud.*, c. 25.

emigrants are to be composed of the able-bodied, the young, and the healthful ; in a word, the *elite* of the empire, these are to be bribed, starved and conveyed out of the country. Such are they whom the standard of emigration is unfurled to collect ; and a bounty of a sixty-pounds loan offered ; and while it is mustering its recruits, its language is, “let the dead bury their dead, follow thou me !”

(9.) But the impolicy of the scheme, after all, is nothing to its cruelty. That, though inflicting much injury on the interests of the country, would, on the principles previously laid down in this book, remedy itself ; but this is irreparable. What has been previously said on this particular subject may be here repeated ; that the capitalists are they who ought to emigrate, if they are so disposed, and not the industrious labourers, who, under proper encouragement, may subsist anywhere ; and that this is a just view of the subject, however much it may clash with that of our present projectors, I appeal to the entire annals of emigration<sup>1</sup>. If humanity have anything to do with the business, this point has been long decided. To allude to the early emigrations from Ireland ; Archbishop Boulter says : “Of these, possibly one out of ten may be a man of substance, and may do well enough abroad, but the case of the rest is deplorable<sup>2</sup>.” So it still continues. There now lies before me a mass of evidence which I have collected on this point,

<sup>1</sup> Graham, *Rise and Progress of the United States*, vol. i. pp. 30, 68, 185, 303, &c. Burke, *America*, vol. ii. pp. 144, 219. Raynal, *Hist. des Indes*, tom. vii. l. 13. p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Boulter, *Letters*, vol. i. pp. 260, 261.

but which I shall, however, refrain from copying ; the general fact of the great distress which has hitherto accompanied these deportations, whether to Africa or America, is now too well known to require me to harrow up the feelings of my readers in proving it. The sufferings which have been thus occasioned have been, hitherto, beyond calculation greater than those which a similar number would have been exposed to in the country from whence they have been sent. This distressing fact it behoves the advocates of emigration to know, and, if they know, not to conceal. The miserable condition of our poor emigrant countrymen has long called forth the pity of even those strangers amongst whom they have taken refuge ; and, we are assured, has subjected the latter to those onerous burdens to which they have generously submitted in their behalf. The late accounts of the mortality and distress amongst these unfortunate exiles in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is but a continuation of the miseries which they have been long subject to ; previous ones from Southern Africa have not been of a much more cheering nature. Nor is it from books or public prints alone that this information is derived ; most of us have had some opportunities of obtaining it personally, and from private quarters, and not unfrequently from the lips of the sufferers themselves ; information, I confess, which is quite sufficient to rouse one's feelings in afterwards opening upon florid representations, illustrated with beautiful maps, which do anything rather than truly represent to individuals, who have never been beyond these shores, the destiny that awaits many of them, if they leave their native land.

Let the Poyais stock fluctuate on 'Change as it may ; and the Cacique of, I forget what territory, dispose of his allotments to the poor dupes, our countrymen, as he can, (though, I think, " this also is an iniquity to be punished by the judges" ) ; but let not the British parliament be any longer accessary to the act of decoying out of the country its real friends and defenders. Such are never superfluous ; a time may not be distant when it can still less dispense with them, even than at present ; and even now we presume to think all the resources of the empire are not more than necessary to its welfare and preservation.

Many other reasons might be adduced in proof of the position, that the first remedy proposed, of ameliorating the condition of Ireland by expatriating numbers of its people, never did aforesaid, nor will at present, conduce to that end ; but, on the contrary, would inevitably aggravate the distresses under which it has long continued to labour.

§ VIII. (1.) The second proposition of our political economists in favour of that country, is, the enlarging, or, as formerly expressed, the " engrossing" of farms, by annihilating the small tenures which are at present numerous in that country : which operation has now a particular term to express it, and is called " clearing ;" a very emphatic phrase, as connected with its consequences. Hume somewhere says, " the comparison between the management of human beings and cattle is shocking ;" but what terms can convey the natural disgust one feels when the comparison is between human beings and vermin ? The

rage, however, is for “clearing” estates in Ireland from these human vermin, as a meritorious sort of act, and the chief means of relieving the country; the proposal must consequently be examined a little.

(2.) As to the cruelty of this scheme, it far exceeds the former one. In order duly to estimate it, we must attend for a moment to the condition in which the little agricultural tenant is placed. Unlike all others, whatever be their industrious pursuits, he is virtually at the mercy of one individual, his landlord; and if that fails him, he is at once bereft of the means of subsistence, of his daily labour, and of the house that shelters him and his family; which, if he be an Irish tenant, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, he built himself<sup>1</sup>;—in a word, deprived at once of the benefit of his past exertions, and of all his future hopes. But when a number of such are “cleared” at once (to adopt the significant phrase used in the Emigration Committee, and which we learn is now the true patriotic practice); a crowd comprised, of course, of both sexes and of every period of life, from helpless infancy to decrepit age, including those in the prime of their days, to whom, however, health and youth are of no avail, for there is no employment to be obtained, nor any refuge or relief to be found for the wanderers; I question whether the broad eye of GOD beholds upon the face of the earth a greater mass of misery than is constantly created by these “clearances.” Could we take from them a single case, and trace its history, from the expulsion of the unfortunate wretch from his

<sup>1</sup> See Right Hon. Charles Grant’s Speech on the State of Ireland, April 22, 1822; Hansard, vol. vi. p. 1507.



native home, "through all his wanderings round this world of care," as his own beautiful poet expresses himself,—driven from place to place, and branded as a fugitive and a vagabond everywhere, till his pilgrimage in search of employment and of bread closes, perhaps, in another hemisphere, amidst strangers, who "give him a little earth for charity,"—I am persuaded few of those high-wrought cases of fictitious distress which occasionally awake our ready sympathies could approach the touching reality which the story would present.

The difference, therefore, between emigrations and these clearances is, that the latter exhibit a far more summary and unfeeling method of effectuating the same purpose. In the former case "the simple folk" are to be solicited, and in some sort bribed out of the country; means of escape are placed within their reach; allotments in a land flowing with milk and honey are proffered, (though, alas! many of those who have gone forth, have perished in the wilderness); but in these drivings, "clearances," or whatever they may be called, the exile is involuntary. Whatever be the nature of the crime in the eyes of those who hold that "they have no business to be where they are<sup>1</sup>," and who act upon that opinion, the punishment is, in fact, a severer form of that which is in most cases awarded as the sentence upon felony. Political economy has, on the one hand, inveighed against a large population, and, on the other, against small farms; and its converts have acted upon the palatable doctrine. The population have been expelled from their native fields like a drove of oxen, driven they knew not where, and withstood

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay, p. 531.

wherever they have attempted to take refuge. The fires have been quenched upon thousands of hearths, and the ploughshare now drives over the foundations of many a humble abode, which was once the refuge of peace and happiness. Some of the wretched survivors may, perhaps, linger amongst the ruins of their former habitations; but most of them have to seek refuge elsewhere, some in this country, some across the Atlantic; whither they were conveyed in vessels more crowded than slave-ships, in which many of them constantly expired, till even the humanity of strangers was excited, and the legislature of America interfered in their behalf, to protect them on their passage, and succour the survivors on their arrival<sup>1</sup>. These became the slaves and drudges of America<sup>2</sup>, till premature death, in some form or other, and generally in its most appalling one, poverty and desolation, terminates their hapless story<sup>3</sup>. This may be deemed an overcharged statement; in many cases it is far otherwise. One principal branch of the subject, which I have elsewhere undertaken, has been to inquire into the extent of emigration to America, in order to answer the theory which is compelled, in defence of its fancied doublings, to pronounce it "immaterial," and the examination has incidentally presented me with this melancholy picture of the fate of the less fortunate exiles of Erin, whom, for at least a century past, these clearances have expelled from her shores.

<sup>1</sup> "There were 246 Irish paupers in the New York workhouse, April 1st, 1813."—(Dr. Dwight's Travels, vol. iii. p. 449.)

"The paupers in the United States are chiefly foreigners."—(Warden, Statist. Acc. of the United States, vol. i. p. 51; ii. p. 88.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 192, &c. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 259, 269, 272, &c.

(3.) It would be well if those who are either the advocates of clearing farms in Ireland, or the actors in so cruel a scheme, would advert to the condition of that country. They should recollect that, owing to the rapacious conduct of too many of the landowners, the cruel system of subletting, and, above all, the base desertion of the country by those who derive their all from it, no labour worth speaking of, except what agriculture supplies, is demanded or encouraged in Ireland. To expel a number of these tenants at once is, therefore, to send them forth to certain destitution. Such would be the case in England, were England similarly circumstanced ; so it was, indeed, when she was so in times past. Lord Bacon strongly inveighed against “ engrossing large pasturages ;” but, notwithstanding humanity, policy, and even the legislature then discouraged the evil, we find it was still prevalent, and its consequences were, what they now are, deplorable in the extreme. Hear Sir Thomas More on this intensely touching case : “ Therefore is it,” says he, “ that one covetous and unsatiable cormorant, and very plague of his native country, may compass about and enclose many thousand acres of ground within one pale or hedge ; the husbandmen be thrust out of their own, or else either by covin and fraud, or violent oppression, they be put besides it ; or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied, that they be compelled to sell all. By one means, therefore, or by other, either by hook or by crook, they must needs depart away,—poor, silly, wretched souls ! men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers with their young babes, and the whole

household, small in substance, and much in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in; all their household stuff, which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale; yet being suddenly thrust out, they be constrained to sell it as a thing of nought. And when they have wandered abroad till that be spent, what can they then do but to steal, and then justly, pardy, be hanged, or else go about a begging? And yet then also they be cast into prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not; whom no man will set at work, though they never so willingly prefer themselves thereto<sup>1</sup>."

So far the authority of More on the effects of "clearing" in England in his time, which was before other and sufficient sources of employment were developed. To suppose that this intrepid patriot was either ignorant of the cause of the distress that pervaded the kingdom at that period, or that he exaggerated its extent, would argue but little in favour of our own knowledge of the history of the country. Of these poor fugitives, who, as he tells us, were necessitated to become purloiners, we learn that "72,000 great and petty thieves were put to death in the reign of Henry VIII<sup>2</sup>." In Elizabeth's time, we are informed "rogues were trussed up apace, and that there was not a year commonly, wherein three or four hundred of them were not devoured and eaten up by the gallows in one place or another." Strype, speaking of

<sup>1</sup> More, *Utopia*, vol. i. pp. 59, 60, 61.

<sup>2</sup> Hollingshed, *Description of England*, vol. i. p. 186.

one county only, Somersetshire, says, “ forty persons had been there executed, in a year, for robberies, thefts, and other felonies ; thirty-five burnt in the hand ; thirty-seven whipped ; 183 discharged ; and that those that were discharged were wicked and desperate persons. Notwithstanding this great number of indictments, the fifth part of the felonies committed in the county were not brought to trial,—owing to the remissness of the magistrates, or the foolish lenity of the people. The rapines committed by the infinite number of the wicked, wandering, idle people were intolerable to the poor countrymen, and obliged them to a perpetual watch of their sheepfolds, pastures, woods, and corn fields. The other counties in England were in no better condition than Somersetshire, and many of them were even in a worse : there were at least three or four hundred able-bodied vagabonds in every county, who lived by theft and rapine ; and who sometimes met in troops to the number of sixty, and committed spoil on the inhabitants : if all the felons of this kind were reduced to subjection, they would form a strong army : the magistrates were awed, by the association and threats of the confederates, from executing justice on the offenders<sup>1</sup>.” Sir F. M. Eden quotes this passage in his history of the poor, as exhibiting the state of the kingdom at large, and plainly attributes it to want of employment for “the superfluous hands which were not required in agriculture<sup>2</sup>,” owing to the “ engrossments” Lord Bacon alludes to. I would simply direct the consideration of our anti-populationists, especially

<sup>1</sup> Strype, *Annals*, vol. iv. p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Eden, *Hist. of the Poor*, vol. i. pp. 110, 111.

those who are busying themselves about Ireland, to these facts ; the history of that unhappy country has continued to the present day the practical comment upon their pernicious principles : the same state of things would assuredly have continued here, if the population, thus “ driven,” had not ultimately found employment and bread, and by means which the system at present adopted in Ireland necessarily withholds from her wretched inhabitants.

(4.) But as it respects that country, not only has the entire system of administering the landed property, especially that part of it called “ clearing,” inflicted private wrongs of the most fatal character, but it has been most assuredly the fruitful source of those public outrages which have so long disfigured the annals of that unhappy country. I am aware that some Irish landlords, and their apologists, have very dexterously attributed these outrages to the tithing system, as if any body upon earth could believe that such landlords as they generally are, in respect of nine-tenths of the produce, would be kinder than ecclesiastical ones, were they put into possession of the remaining tenth : but more concerning this proposition hereafter. To mention a few of these fatal disturbances and insurrections. That in Munster, in the year 1760, originated in the oppressive treatment of many landed proprietors, especially in their turning adrift vast numbers of the old tenantry of the province, “ in order to throw many farms into one,” to obtain, if possible, a greater “ surplus produce,” to use the phraseology of the day. Numbers were thus at once deprived of their ancient holdings, probably the



possessions of their forefathers : they were called *level-  
lers* ; and several years elapsed before they were put  
down, and not before many of them were indeed levelled  
and put down for ever—laid in their native earth. One  
of the Irish historians thus describes this insurrection :  
“ It was occasioned by the expulsion of great num-  
bers of labouring peasants, destitute of any regular  
means of subsistence by any other species of industry,  
while those who remained unexpelled, or procured  
small spots of ground, had no means of paying the  
exorbitant rents, even by labour, the pay of which was,  
by the smallness of the demand, beyond all due pro-  
portion low. The misery of these cottagers was com-  
pleted when they were, by inclosures, deprived of com-  
monage, which to many had been at first allowed.  
Numbers of them secretly assembled in the night, and  
vented their fury on objects ignorantly conceived to  
be the causes of their misery<sup>1</sup>.” I hardly know whe-  
ther this insurrection was the same with that of the  
*white-boys* ; in their cause, however, they were iden-  
tified ; which was the intolerable oppression of the  
landed proprietors<sup>2</sup>. In 1763 and 1764, the *hearts-of-  
steel* appeared. This fatal insurrection was likewise  
excited by the cruelty of the same class, exercised  
through the medium of their subordinate agents, the  
middle-men, who demanded excessive fines, and racked  
the old tenants to an extent utterly beyond their power  
to pay. They were CLEARED. “ The hapless peasants  
being thus abandoned, gave way to the impulse of their

<sup>1</sup> Gordon, Hist. of Ireland, vol. ii. pp. 240, 241.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell, Phil. Survey of Ireland, p. 304. Wakefield's Account of Ireland, vol. ii. p. 9.



ungovernable passions, and vented their fury on those whom they considered as their oppressors. These commotions"—(I am quoting Mr. Wakefield at present) "afford a striking and melancholy proof of the country at the time they took place: and as they arose from causes unconnected with public measures, may convince those who ascribe every evil they experience to the government, that *national misfortunes depend more on the conduct of individuals than is generally believed or admitted*<sup>1</sup>." To pass over many minor disturbances, the *Right-Boys* appeared in about 1786, and marched in hostile bodies of hundreds, and sometimes thousands. The real origin of this insurrection may be best given in the words of the then attorney-general of Ireland, the Right Honourable John Fitzgibbon, who declared in his place in the Irish commons house on that occasion, that though tithes had been mentioned as the cause of it, yet such was not the fact, but that it arose from "the peasants being ground down to powder by exorbitant rents, who were so far from being able to pay their dues to the clergy, that they possessed not food or raiment for themselves." In a word, he boldly threw the wretchedness, misery, and guilt he described, at the door of their inexorable landlords<sup>2</sup>. These were again CLEARED and put down. I shall not attempt to enumerate the whole of these events; but will only mention another case of a public nature; the private and individual sufferings inflicted by this system are of course never heard of or recorded. The manner in which the

<sup>1</sup> Wakefield, Account of Ireland, vol. ii. pp. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon, Hist. of Ireland, vol. ii. pp. 299, 300.

tenantry on the estates of a great Irish absentee in the county of Limerick have been recently treated, caused those disturbances which have but lately terminated. We may judge how widely "the peace of a county would be affected, when a body of twenty thousand tenantry were thrown into a state of furious agitation<sup>1</sup>." The eminent statesman I quote, who was for a considerable time officially connected with the country, fully sanctions me in all I have said. Speaking of "the commotions which for the last sixty years have tormented and desolated Ireland," he pronounces that "they all sprung immediately from local oppressions<sup>2</sup>."

Finally, then, who can doubt but that the elements of the late Irish rebellion, whatever might be the motives of the prime agitators, were that neglect, and cruelty, and oppression, and consequent poverty and distress, under which the peasantry of Ireland had groaned for so many generations; when, in addition to many public and political wrongs, fancied or real, so vast a number were smarting under the severer inflictions of private injuries, or treasuring up the remembrance of such as had been perpetrated upon others dear to them, their parents, their families, their friends. I have heard many, who, maintaining most strongly the evident superiority of the protestant faith and form of worship, as well as the unrivalled privi-

<sup>1</sup> Speech of the Right Hon. Charles Grant, in the House of Commons, April 22, 1822. Hansard's Parl. Debates, vol. vi. p. 1504.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1505. For further proofs that absenteeism is the remote cause of these outrages, and invariably impedes their cure, see all the recent reports on that country.—(State of Ireland, 4th Report, pp. 550, 551, 573. Minutes of Evidence before the Lords, 1824; pp. 8, 207, 376, &c.)

leges of the British constitution, have expressed their astonishment that the belief in the one, and attachment to the other, have not spread more generally, and, indeed, become universal. A moment's consideration, however, may abate their surprise: it is quite sufficient to explain, that such are the religion and government, supported by nine-tenths, perhaps, of the great proprietors of Ireland. Not another word is necessary.

(5.) But it abundantly suffices to plead, not only in extenuation, but in full justification of this conduct, and all its fatal consequences, that the proprietors of Ireland, in driving the little tenantry from their farms, and clearing the country of as many inhabitants as possible, are only acting on the plainest principles of political economy; which would have the country possessed, if it had its way, in some such manner as a master of the ceremonies would people a ball-room, that is, by a select few; though it is not quite clear how, in either case, the many could be dispensed with. Agriculture was the first to imbibe this palatable doctrine, and will, I fear, be the first to suffer by it. Its short-sighted friends have invariably admitted, that a minute system of cultivation is by far the most productive; but they hold, that what they call the "surplus produce" is greater, the larger the farms, or, in other words, the fewer persons are employed upon the same extent of land. Even supposing this were the fact, which, however, I entirely disbelieve, do they think the question is to be thus speedily decided, on a mere principle of self-interest? Supposing they can make it out clearly that one half

the hands now employed in cultivating the land would, if the moiety were turned adrift, leave rather more surplus produce than is now obtained, it must be obvious that that moiety must take refuge somewhere; the manufacturing districts must receive them, most of which, it is alleged, and I fear truly, are overpeopled at present, and from the operation of this very cause. So far, perhaps, it will be said, that the owners of land have a perfect right to do what they will with their own; which is a notion I shall not now pause to discuss, further than to say, that it has probably been the apology for more cruelty and oppression than all other excuses put together. But then, when these gentlemen have driven forth nearly all the little yeomanry, and many of the labourers who have to follow other and less natural pursuits, they refuse to allow these in turn to do what they will with *their* own: on the contrary, after having, without either pity or remorse, expelled them from their ancient homes, and torn asunder every other tie, they are nevertheless fully bent on retaining their mercenary grasp upon them, and consequently demand that they should lay out with them all their earnings in their new callings, though they will not give them, perhaps, one half of the provision for the same sum that they could procure from those foreigners, on whom they have rendered them dependent for employment and for bread. Let me not be misunderstood. I am an advocate for protecting every branch of British industry that needs protection, and agriculture above all, as the most necessary, permanent, and profitable kind of labour; but not for a system which will calculate to a grain whe-

ther the same tract which sustains in comfort, peace, and happiness a hundred thousand human beings, might not yield a greater surplus, were half of them dispossessed, no matter what became of them; an inquiry which I never yet saw pursued, either by those who make these proposals, or those who act upon them. But let them only recollect, that those whom they expel have still mouths, and must be fed; and I think it may perhaps strike them, that, on national principles, these computations may be erroneous, however correct they seem in the estimation of individual selfishness.

(6.) But I hope I have been able to show, throughout this work<sup>1</sup>, that our individual interests, duly and permanently considered, are identified with those of the community, and that prosperity, public as well as private, rests upon the solid foundation of humanity. I would therefore remark that the plan of accumulating farms has not answered. The inducements held out to the proprietors have been falsified; and, in these trying times, they will appear more fallacious every day. With the exception, perhaps, of the better preservation of game (and that may often be doubted), in all other respects they have been prejudicial to the owners. Smaller rents are invariably paid for the larger farms<sup>2</sup>, and those rents, in bad

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to that about to be published, of which the present treatise forms a part, as before mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> Complete English Farmer, p. 57. Winifrey's Rural Improvements, pp. 289, 291, 409. Farmer's Letters, p. 121. Encyclopedia Britannica, Supplement, Art. Caithness. Col. Woodhouse, Times, May 7, 1822, &c. Dr. Macculloch, Highlands, p. 286. In this work the cruelty of "clearing," as well as its impolicy, is forcibly portrayed. If then the smaller farms pay a

times, are paid with far less punctuality and certainty: but, above all, the immense increase of the poor rates in the agricultural districts, since these monopolies have prevailed, and wherever they do prevail (which the occupiers are perpetually urging on the consideration of their landlords, and which certainly materially affect the interests of the latter<sup>1</sup>), infinitely outweighs the paltry saving of keeping a few farm-houses in repair. I beseech the great landed proprietors of England, whom I believe to be, as a class, the most humane to their dependents of any description of persons, perhaps, in the world, to reconsider this important question. Let them consider the fallacious inducements which have been held forth to them, utterly to destroy one of the most interesting ranks of our countrymen, the yeomanry, thereby evidently diminishing their own numerical and real influence in the community. It was said by agents, who did not relish the trouble of a numerous tenantry<sup>2</sup>,—by farmers who, in the times of high prices, like so many Naboths, coveted their humble neighbour's little possessions, that the lesser cultivators would be far better off as labourers. Have such kept their word of promise either to the ear, the sense, or the heart? They have not! If we can credit the uncontradicted evidence laid before a committee

larger proportionate rent, and pay it more punctually, what is the fact, but a demonstration that such raise a larger, instead of a smaller, *surplus produce*? To assert the contrary is one of the absurdities with which the modern system is loaded, and of which this doctrine is as glaring an instance as that of the present notion on absenteeism.

<sup>1</sup> Report on Labourers' Wages, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> See the Earl of Winchelsea's communication to the Board of Agriculture, vol. i. p. 84.



of the house of commons, it is a melancholy truth that such labourers are in little better condition than those of Ireland, having not a taste of animal food, perhaps, in a month, and subsisting, by whole parishes, if not counties together, upon public charity<sup>1</sup>! Meantime what has been gained? A once happy village converted into a desolate habitation of paupers, and the destruction of one of our most interesting classes, compensated for by the creation of two or three nondescripts, who, as wisely as their betters, attribute the misery by which they are surrounded to early marriages and a redundant population<sup>2</sup>.

(7.) Though I trust I have been enabled to show elsewhere the infinite superiority, in every point of view, of minute cultivation; yet, in respect to Ireland, as the question at this moment involves the home, bread, and life itself of multitudes of our fellow-subjects, I will again allude to it. I shall not, however, now enter upon the subject minutely or scientifically, but content myself at present with appealing to the experience of mankind, in past and present ages, who upon this matter, whatever may have been their darkness (as some suppose) on all others, cannot possibly have been ignorant. Without recurring to the examples of Judea and Greece<sup>3</sup>, I shall but slightly mention that of Rome, where, in its better days, agriculture was illustrated by genius, and ennobled by

<sup>1</sup> Report on Labourers' Wages, 1824.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> The area of Judea, reduced into English acres, and divided by the number of the inhabitants, all of whom were agricultural, will fully prove the early practice and the wonderful effects of minute cultivation. If this appeal be disallowed, the same facts, relative to the principal Grecian states, will afford the same demonstration. —(See particularly Boeckh's Athens, vol. ii. p. 248.)



station, beyond what it has ever been since. The shares represented as sufficient for the maintenance of a Roman citizen, tried in early life, my historical faith ; and the farm of a Cincinnatus, and others, were to me as so many splendid fables. I have now seen my error, and, in gratefully subscribing to my own ignorance, bow to the sufficiency of nature, and the creative energies of the representative of the Deity—man : neither of which, I will venture to say, have had their productive powers fully developed, though it has been the most pleasing part of a long and laborious task to record indubitable instances of the almost miraculous development of both, especially as evidenced in the humbler walks of life<sup>1</sup>. Without professing much erudition, I think I may venture to assert that the best days of Rome were those when the lands of Italy were the most minutely cultivated ; and that the monopoly which ensued was the precursor and, indeed, the occasion of the ruin of the empire. But the poets, the philosophers, and the patriots of Rome, unanimous on this point, sung and wrote and pleaded in vain ; the panders of wealth, the political economists of the day, prevailed. It was, doubtless, the policy of these to recommend that the lands of Italy should go out of cultivation, that property should be engrossed, and that the people should be supplied by importation ; and they had this argument in their favour, of which their successors are totally destitute,—the countries from whence they derived their supplies were provinces of the empire, and at their command. They prevailed ; and one of

<sup>1</sup> In the Treatise about to be published.

their noblest historians, Tacitus, laments that the lands of Italy were passing out of cultivation, and that the lives of the Roman citizens were dependent upon foreign supplies, and placed at the mercy of the winds and waves. On the subject of minute cultivation, the Roman agricultural writers, who form a peculiarly interesting class of authors, were unanimous<sup>1</sup>: times, however, are wonderfully changed, since the cultivator of an estate from which a dictator of the world was called, would now be deemed, if in Ireland, a proper object to be “cleared,” and, if here, a candidate for the workhouse! But, as such allusions to past times may perhaps rather weaken than fortify the argument, with those to whom I would address myself, in behalf of minute cultivation, I shall appeal to the present experience of mankind, in those countries where it is at this moment being put to the strictest test. Our statesmen are constantly in the habit of instancing the policy of foreign countries on far less important topics than that of the best means of sustaining in plenty and contentment an overflowing population; this must be my apology, if any be

<sup>1</sup> One only of these I beg leave to quote, confident that what he records illustrates a principle which human experience in all ages and countries has fully illustrated and confirmed: “Refert Græcinus in libro de vineis, ex patre suo sæpe se audire solitum, Paridium quendam duas filias, et vineis consitum habuisse fundum, cujus partem tertiam, nubenti majori filiæ dedisse in dotem, ac nihilo minus æque magnos fructus ex duabus partibus ejusdem fundi percipere solitum. Minorem deinde filiam nuptui collocasse in dimidia parte reliqui agri. Nec sic ex pristino reditu detraxisse. Quod quid conjicit? Nisi melius scilicet postea cultam esse tertiam illam fundi partem quam antea universam.”—(Columella, de Re Rusticâ, l. iv. c. 3.) Nor is this more than a practical comment on the principle laid down by a much earlier agricultural writer, indeed the very earliest extant: *πλέον ἡμῖν πλεονέχει*.

necessary, in referring to the practice of those countries, where the smallest surface suffices to sustain the largest numbers, and where, consequently, the most perfect system of culture necessarily prevails.

(8.) Doubtless the little state of Lucca is the most densely populated independent district in the civilized world, and as such I have selected it, wherewith to commence this practical demonstration. There are between three and four hundred inhabitants on the square mile throughout. It was, even in Addison's days, the most thickly peopled state in Italy<sup>1</sup>; and, as the laws of nature have equally operated every where, and at all times, except where they have been withstood, its condition corresponded. His description of it is as follows: "It is very pleasant to see how the small territories of this little republic are cultivated to the best advantage, so that one cannot find the least spot of ground that is not made to contribute its utmost to the owner.—In all the inhabitants there appears an air of cheerfulness and plenty, not often to be met with<sup>2</sup>." Perhaps it may be supposed that Addison knew nothing of cultivation; he could not, of course, compare it with the present practice. A late writer, and one fully competent on this point, will dispose of this objection. "The little state of Lucca," Forsyth says, "is so populous, that very few acres, and those subject to inundation, are allotted to each farmer in the plain. Hence their superior skill in agriculture and draining; hence that variety of crops in every enclosure, which gives to the vale of Serchio the economy and

<sup>1</sup> Addison, Italy, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 306.

show of a large kitchen garden.” Would the advocates for large farms in this country pay their landlords the rent the Lucchese do? That rent is two-thirds of the whole produce, together with other enormous burdens. The author I have just quoted, after bringing proofs of the superiority of minute cultivation, from a variety of quarters and different periods, expresses his convictions as to the agricultural state of Italy, which affords so great a variety, as to its population and the size of its farms, in these words: “EVERY STATE IN THE PENINSULA IS PRODUCTIVE, OR OTHERWISE, IN PROPORTION TO THE NUMBER OF FARMERS ON A GIVEN SPACE OF LAND, EQUALLY GOOD<sup>1</sup>.” Nor is this the opinion of our own countrymen merely, but, as far as I know, of every intelligent foreigner who has written on the subject. I would request the reader to refer to Sismondi’s account of the agriculture of Tuscany and shall now only quote one other author, who informs his readers that he did not traverse Italy in order to speak of its edifices, its cities, or its monuments, but to relate its rural history, and to describe how its fields are cultivated, I mean Chateaubvieux. To the whole work of this highly gifted writer I must refer; it will well repay the trouble of the perusal, by the pleasure as well as the instruction it will afford. It establishes, as it respects that most interesting country, the fact, beyond contradiction, that large farms, of which there are many of a vast size in Italy, compared with the small ones, of which happily there are more, invariably exhibit the most

<sup>1</sup> Forsyth, Remarks on Italy, pp. 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

slovenly, imperfect, and unproductive cultivation<sup>1</sup>; while agriculture in detail is invariably crowned with health, plenty, and happiness. He notices that the general custom in Italy is to give half the produce in kind as rent<sup>2</sup>: I again ask our large farmers if they could agree to this<sup>3</sup>? He gives it as his estimate, that notwithstanding the density of the population of some of these rural districts where minute cultivation prevails, at least three-fourths of the produce is brought to market<sup>4</sup>. Is this surplus produce? I wish I might quote from this author more at large, as his evident knowledge of the subject would then give his deliberate opinion the greater weight. "This system," he says, speaking of minute culture, "possesses the advantage of bringing the greatest quantity of produce to market. I make this assertion in opposition to Arthur Young, who attributes this advantage exclusively to large farms. But from the accounts just presented, it is evident, in the first place, that the subdivision of the farms increases at the same time the number of plantations, gardens, and farm yards; by which means abundance of minor produce is obtained which is lost upon a large farm. I am of opinion that not any country brings so large a proportion of its produce to market as Piedmont." (The population in Piedmont is 222 on the square mile, in Great Britain 162.) "The number of farms in Piedmont is surprising, and yet this limited coun-

<sup>1</sup> Chateaueux, Description of the Rural Manners and Economy of Italy, pp. 55, 86, 88, 89, 90. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 4, 15, 32.

<sup>3</sup> We learn from other quarters, that where the *metairie* system does not prevail, the rents of little farms, paid in money, would be here regarded as very high.—(Hallam, Letters from Italy.)

<sup>4</sup> Chateaueux, Travels in Italy, &c. p. 8.

try, having a great part of its surface occupied by mountains, after satisfying its own wants, supplies the territory of Genoa, Nice, and even the port of Toulon with corn and cattle." (Is there anything in the way of "surplus produce" like this, excepting the instance of poor Ireland?) "Without making an exact calculation, it is evident from this statement that there must be a superfluity of produce in the country, which must be attributed to its rural economy rather than to its direct fertility, for the average return of corn in Piedmont is not quite six for one<sup>1</sup>." That economy he explains in one word—minute cultivation; and adds, on this subject, "the superiority of the agriculture and rural economy beyond that of perhaps every other country, and the phenomena of its great population and extensive exportation of produce, will no longer appear extraordinary<sup>2</sup>." The farms of Tuscany, he observes, are not more than from three to ten acres, (paying one half the produce as rent): he dwells upon their extraordinary productiveness, which he justly attributes to the thickly planted habitations<sup>3</sup>. He notices most emphatically that "Italy supplies the political economist with lessons of wisdom<sup>4</sup>;" ours, however, would denominate all such the ravings of folly. He remarks upon the fatal effects of depopulation on the happiness and prosperity, and especially the health of various parts of the peninsula; the latter he invariably connects with minute cultivation<sup>5</sup>: that where the population disappears, the destruction of the class of consumers soon ruins

<sup>1</sup> Chateaucieux, Description, &c. p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 93.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 99.



in return that of the producers; and contrasts this state of things with those districts where numbers create plenty and prosperity<sup>1</sup>. I wish I could insert his beautiful description of the reclamation of the marsh in the Val di Chiana, consisting of about three thousand acres belonging to the religious order of St. Stephen. It seemed the most natural to throw the whole into one grand domain, with a suitable mansion in the centre. But the Tuscans knew better than thus to consign it to languor and inactivity. They divided it into a number of small farms, the extraordinary productiveness of which (for he visited it in time of harvest), and the happy occupation of the numerous families, its inhabitants, he describes in a most pleasing manner. It just strikes me, that, if the protestant order of St. Stephen's in this country would follow the example of the Italian one, and reclaim an Irish bog by way of trial, and thus parcel it out amongst a number of meritorious inhabitants, the experiment might be better worth hazarding, notwithstanding the uproar it would certainly create amongst the political economists, than spending ten times the sum in expatriating an equal number of the people<sup>2</sup>. But I must refrain from further quotation of this interesting author: every word of what he has written bears upon the argument in hand, and is the more valuable as proceeding from one whose business it was to make these observations, and evidently qualified for the task, by a thorough acquaintance with agriculture, theoretically

<sup>1</sup> Chateaufvieux, Travels, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> There would then be security for capital, rent, &c.



and practically. In a country the most calculated of all others to put the practice to the test, in which every several district presented a demonstration of the principle, he found the ancient agricultural polity, which is that of nature and of providence, fully justified; and health, plenty, and prosperity connected with the cultivation of the surface of the earth, in, comparatively speaking, minute subdivisions.

(9.) But of all the examples of successful cultivation the world holds forth, at least in modern times, that of the Netherlands is unquestionably the most interesting and important. Little, it is true, has been written on agriculture by the Flemings, its having been their policy, as it is thought, to conceal their superior georgics as much as possible; but it has been known for centuries past, that the modes of culture practised there have been superior to those of all other countries; those who wished for improvement in this most important branch of human industry, therefore, had to proceed thither, and personally observe their methods. This has been the practice with many for ages past, and hence the various essential improvements, whether in reference to the due and constant rotation of crops, the use of artificial grasses, the best stercoraceous system,—in fact, all that conduces to successful farming have been successively introduced into other countries: in a word, Flanders has been the university of agriculture. No wonder is it, therefore, that, in so elaborate a work as the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, we are specially directed to the closest consideration of the agriculture of that country. I wish, in the article on general agriculture, the prac-

tice of this particular district had not been too much lost sight of, in reference to the system of extensive farms ; my observations on the subject would then have been rendered unnecessary. It is unhappily otherwise. But, to quote from the Supplement ; in the article on the Netherlands, the subject is thus prefaced : “ The agriculture of the Netherlands, which, even in the northern portion, that was formerly the Seven United Provinces, was MORE THE FOUNDATION OF ITS WEALTH THAN EITHER MANUFACTURES OR NAVIGATION, deserves the most close examination ; and merits more detailed accounts than our limits will allow<sup>1</sup>. ”

That the agricultural economy of this country demands the deepest consideration, especially in these times and in this country, in which so much is said about excessive population in reference to the means of subsistence, and (theoretically) about the principles of political economy, is manifest, for these important reasons :

1. The kingdom of the Netherlands is the most densely peopled of any considerable country upon earth.

2. Its soil, notwithstanding that its amazing produce has been the means of spreading a very contrary notion, is, on the unanimous authority of all writers who have examined it, the reverse of prolific ; nay, compared with that of the surrounding countries, it is naturally untractable, sterile, and bad<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Encyc. Brit., Supplement, vol. vi. p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Abbé Mann, on the Husbandry of the Netherlands, in Communications to the Board of Agriculture, vol. i. p. 238. Baron de Poederlé ; *ibid.* p. 247. Puffendorf's Introd. Hist. Europe, p. 261. Dr. Harte, Essays on Husbandry, pp. 69, 177. Louis Buonaparte, Ex-King of Holland, Historical Documents, &c., pp. 14, 16. Many others might be added. I shall thus sum up these authorities :

3. That soil, though by no means universally cultivated, has sufficed to feed and maintain its immense population, and perhaps in more comfortable circumstances, generally speaking, than those of any other country; and to sustain, likewise, the poor, and perhaps, on the whole, quite as well as in England.

4. The surplus produce (to use the fashionable term) of the rural population must be very great, from the circumstance of so vast a number of the inhabitants living in the cities and towns of the kingdom; but, to end all uncertainty as to estimates founded on internal calculations,—

5. “No country in Europe provides from its soil so great a quantity of sustenance, not only for its inhabitants, but so large a surplus of food for exportation, and such valuable commodities to exchange for articles of foreign growth, as Flanders<sup>1</sup>.”

6. So great has been that surplus, that it has of late occasioned considerable distress to the cultivators, in that they have not been enabled to dispose of the whole of it elsewhere<sup>2</sup>; in the meantime, it is important to observe, that they applied for and obtained protection against foreign competition in their own markets. “In the year 1824, they petitioned the king of the Netherlands, with a view to protection, to prohibit the importation of foreign grain;” but in lieu of

“The land of Flanders was not naturally fertile: on the contrary, the quality of it is such as merely to admit of fertilization, by a series of operations more or less expensive and laborious. Where cultivation has not been extended, the soil produces nothing but heath and fir.”—(Encyc. Brit., Supplement, vol. vi. p. 86.)

<sup>1</sup> Encyc. Brit., Sup., Netherlands, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob, Travels in Holland, &c. pp. 69, 70.

that he imposed, in anticipation, an increase in the duty upon it, afterwards confirmed by the legislature, amounting to four hundred per centum, compared with that fixed eight years before<sup>1</sup>. Our government has, of late years, been pursuing an opposite policy; how wisely, remains to be seen, or rather is now becoming apparent. I think Mr. Jacob clearly points out, in a book published but a little before his celebrated "Report," some cogent reasons, as yet unanswered, why the British agriculturist, compared with the Dutch, demands far greater protection<sup>2</sup>.

I cannot forbear withdrawing the attention of the reader from the immediate object in view, in order to point out how sorry a figure the principle of population, which I am opposing in this work, cuts, in the very arena where it ought to triumph. Look at the Netherlands, the most densely peopled kingdom upon earth; and of which Mr. Malthus has somewhere said, or at least of Holland, that it does not keep up its numbers by procreation, but is the grave-yard of Germany; possessing a soil by no means fertile, nor yet wholly cultivated:—have the tendencies and ratios which I shall not restate, having already had so often to repeat them, been manifested there? Alas! for the mingled folly and falsehood of such a statement: the distress, if, generally speaking, there be any, we are assured arises, not from over-population, but over-production<sup>3</sup>, an evil which the true principle of

<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Papers relative to regulations existing in foreign countries in respect of the export and import of grain, Feb. 19, 1827, pp. 18, 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob, *Travels in Holland*, &c. p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 8, 47, 52, 70, &c.

human increase will redress, instead of aggravating, as some ignorantly argue.

(10.) To come, then, to the immediate subject. Seeing these facts, which are in themselves so important and decisive, and sent, as we are, on all hands, to this interesting part of the world, in order to have the clearest insight into the best methods of productive agriculture: let us ask, what is the practice of the Netherlanders in regard of the size of farms? It requires but little research to satisfy ourselves on this point. The farms, with hardly any exceptions, are universally small; small, not merely in comparison with many which disgrace our present system, but with ours in former times, a generation or two ago, in the days of the honest yeomanry of England. In Arthur Young's *Annals of Agriculture*, we see those consisting of thirty or forty acres spoken of as considerable; there were many, it is observed, of greater extent, but then there were those which could not keep a horse, and where the whole business was executed by the spade<sup>1</sup>. In some of the remoter and more sterile districts, larger tracts may be allowed to be in possession of the same individual; but even then, there are few farms which would be called large in England; while, in the more fertile and best managed districts, the land is cultivated in very small allotments, almost universally<sup>2</sup>, and these, it is observed, diminish in size as the country becomes

<sup>1</sup> Young, *Annals of Agriculture*, vol. i. pp. 222—251.

<sup>2</sup> Abbé Mann, *Communications to the Board*, &c. vol. i. pp. 224, 233, 245. Baron Peederlé; *ibid.* p. 252. Radelit's Report on the Agriculture of Flanders, pp. 44, 92, 227.

richer. But, as it is obviously impossible for me to enter minutely into this branch of the subject, however important, I will at once select the most productive and best cultivated district of this fruitful country by which to put the question to the test. The Abbé Mann, writing at a late period, says, "The agriculture of the Pays de Waes passes, without contestation, for the most complete and perfect in all the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>." This district, Mr. Radcliff, in his "Report of the Agriculture of Flanders," says, "is of merited celebrity, and obviously beautiful to the eye, in the garden-like appearance of its cultivation," exhibiting an unrivalled unity of system and operation<sup>2</sup>. The major part of the farms, "in the country of Waes, which comprehends an extensive tract of Flanders, consist only of six or seven boniers, and many only of three or four<sup>3</sup>." "The bonier may be reckoned three English acres<sup>4</sup>;" consequently their size varies from about nine to eighteen acres. "The farms being so very small, few horses are kept in the land of Waes; the ground is chiefly worked with the spade and hoe<sup>5</sup>. All these contribute, together, to give a

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Mann, Communications, &c. vol. i.

<sup>2</sup> Radcliff, Report of the Agric. of the Netherlands, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> Baron Poederlé, Communications, &c. vol. i. p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> Abbé Mann, Communications, &c., p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> It is a pleasing sight to observe a row, consisting of the cultivator and his family, pursuing the system of spade husbandry, the lesser branches of it busy following the trenches, and planting, sowing, or manuring; more pleasing still to observe the luxuriant produce with which this persevering industry is attended, and most gratifying of all to trace its effects to the comfort it bestows upon the cultivator, and the overflowing plenty it confers on the community. In these observations I draw no conclusions favourable, or otherwise, to mere spade husbandry; but apply



richness and fertility to the soil of this tract, which surpasses almost what can be imagined. No spot lies uncultivated. Fallow ground is unknown<sup>1</sup>." "There are three crops in two years<sup>2</sup>." Another quotation, from the same authority, is most interesting, as illustrative of the effects of population on the quality of the land, as well as the condition of the people. The Abbé Mann says, "The original soil was pure sand, and its present state of fertility is owing to the great number of its industrious inhabitants, who cultivate a few acres round their dwellings, of which, for the most part, they are proprietors<sup>3</sup>." Baron Poederlé concurs in attributing the great fertility of this celebrated district to its great population<sup>4</sup>.

I must further remark, that this system of minute cultivation is not the result of accident, as is so often alleged in reference to Ireland, but of deliberate preference and choice. It has been the principle of Belgic legislation to encourage it<sup>5</sup>; "the government which has so much at heart all the minutest interests of agriculture<sup>6</sup>," has "passed ordinances in some provinces for restraining the extent of farms, and prescribing a division of those of too great extent<sup>7</sup>;"

them to the general argument in favour of continuing the present small farm system where it still exists, and of returning to it, where it is practicable, without inflicting injury on individuals; being convinced, to adopt the language of a very able and elegant writer on agriculture, that "smaller shares are more capable of admitting a correct and accurate husbandry."—(Harte's Essays, p. 79.)

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Mann, Communications, &c., vol. i. p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Encyc. Brit., Supplement, vol. vi. p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> Abbé Mann, Communications, &c., vol. i. p. 234.

<sup>4</sup> Baron Poederlé, Communications, &c., vol. i. p. 247.

<sup>5</sup> Abbé Mann, Communications, &c., vol. i. p. 223.

<sup>6</sup> Radcliff, Report on the Agric. of Flanders, p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> Abbé Mann, Communications, &c., vol. i. p. 223.

“and expressly prohibiting the letting farm-houses fall to ruin, without rebuilding them, a thing many proprietors seek, for the sake of sparing the expense of rebuilding and repairs<sup>1</sup>.” This is a very different thing to government taxing the rebuilding of such, as some in our Emigration Committee seem to propose<sup>2</sup>. It may be thought, however, that quoting legislative enactments carries but little weight to the argument, such being not always founded on the most enlightened principles ; but it must be observed that the government, in thus acting, did not force, but follow public opinion ; the superiority of small farms having been proved by all those who had, in that country, directed their attention to the subject and written upon it : in deferring to their recorded opinions, the legislature, therefore, pursued an enlightened as well as liberal policy. I particularly allude to the Abbé Mann, whom our Board of Agriculture consulted on the husbandry of the Netherlands, which drew from him that admirable memoir already quoted : in which there is an allusion, in a note to his observations on this important subject (so the Board confess it to be), which, says their report, “ may be seen in the library of the British Museum<sup>3</sup>, of the Royal Society, the

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Mann, Communications, vol. i. p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Emigration Report, third part, p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> The board says, this work may be seen in the library of the British Museum. The difficulty, however, of obtaining access to that institution the writer of this has fully experienced, but which he has only shared with others, whose claims to admission to any national institution, where literature is professedly patronised, are far greater than his. The regulations are doubtless meant to secure the property of the establishment, and are so far proper ; but it is doubtful whether they answer that purpose ; while they certainly operate to the exclusion of many who may live remote from the

Society of Antiquaries, the Board of Longitude, &c. &c.” Happy would it have been for the agricultural world, if it had been “seen” in their publications; but the principle it advocates did not coincide with the fashionable and fatal practice they espoused, founded on a principle of selfishness, as it regarded the class that had to determine a question which affected the happiness of thousands of families, and supported by false representations respecting the interest of those who were to be annihilated, as farmers, in order to execute the design. And it has too well succeeded. We may, however, still turn to the Netherlands, and see a better system yet remaining, where the farms, on the general average, are about the size of those little takes which have been wrested from the cottagers of England, by the large monopolists, under the pretence, forsooth, that it injured the landlord, the cultivator, and the public. These being all the parties concerned, it is worth while to examine these several allegations, as it respects the agriculture of the Netherlands.

As far as the landlord is concerned, this is stated to be the effect. “The increase of population,” says the Baron Poederlé, “since the peace of 1749, has greatly diminished the size of farms, as well in Hainault as elsewhere.” (So it ought to have done every where, if feeling, policy, or common sense had been consulted.) “*The proprietors, in dividing their estates, have almost*

metropolis, and who, consequently, have not an equal facility in obtaining the required introduction. He is bound, however, to add, that nothing can exceed the attention of the officers, if by good chance a stranger, resident at a distance from the capital, gain admission.

*doubled their value*; and Brabant has no occasion for ordinances to that effect. The states of the province, however, petitioned that the size of farms should be settled<sup>1</sup>." That the smaller the farm is, the higher in proportion is the rent, is true, not only there, but in every country, in England certainly<sup>2</sup>, and especially in Ireland<sup>3</sup>. How then is it possible to suppose that small farms are otherwise than advantageous to landlords, more especially in the latter country, where the tenants constantly build for themselves? But to return to the Netherlands.

What is the effect, secondly, of this minuter system of cultivation on the occupiers? We have beheld, in our country, that the monopolizing system, by depriving them of their farms, has made the little cultivators paupers; there the contrary practice has made them proprietors! Hence we are told that "in Brabant there is hardly any such thing as tenants; each farmer is a proprietor<sup>4</sup>." Even where this is not the case, the advantage of minute cultivation is still with the tenant. Low as produce is in the Netherlands, and heavy as are the rents<sup>5</sup> and taxes<sup>6</sup>, still an agriculturist of the new school confesses that a Dutch boor, with 50 or 60 acres, will manage to live as well or better than an English farmer with 200 acres<sup>7</sup>. But to turn again to the Pays de Waes, the most correctly culti-

<sup>1</sup> Baron Poederlé, Communications, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Complete English Farmer, p. 57. Farmer's Letters, vol. i. pp. 121, 122. De Re Rusticâ, vol. ii. p. 296.

<sup>3</sup> Reports on the State of Ireland, *passim*. 4th Report, Select Committee, pp. 413, 414, 415, 638. 1st Report, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> Abbé Mann, Communications, &c. vol. i. p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> Marshall's Travels through Holland, &c., vol. i. pp. 164, 174.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 190.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 165.

vated district, it may be presumed, in the world; “they cultivate a few acres round their dwellings, of which they are for the most part the proprietors<sup>1</sup>.” In Arthur Young’s *Annals of Agriculture*, where he has been recording the smallness of their farms, some of which “do not employ a horse, but are entirely cultivated by the spade and the hoe,” the comment on this system, as it regards the cultivator, follows shortly afterwards; and it is this: “Many there are who own the land they occupy. An incredible spirit of industry is manifested. Whoever is able purchases a nook where he can, where *sua regna videns miratur*, and falls in love with independence.” The population is undoubtedly encouraged by such means; but is it redundant in proportion to its increase? Let the same writer determine this point likewise: he says, “Considering the population of Flanders, the army receives from it very few mercenaries. Even the servantry” (mark this, ye advocates for overgrown monopolies) “in most of the Flemish towns is drawn from other countries<sup>2</sup>.” And lastly, “so great is every where the plenty, that after what is necessary for home consumption, you can scarcely name an article that is not exported, even raw flax, though linens here are the principal manufacture<sup>3</sup>.” But I have already said enough on “surplus produce,” and shall leave those to decide which is the happiest system,—this, or the one which does all in its power to render as many human beings as possible superfluous; and, having been but

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Mann, *Memoir*, &c. Communications to the Board of Agriculture, vol. i. p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Young, *Annals of Agriculture*, vol. i. p. 227, note.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 250.

too successful in its attempts, is now beginning to be bewildered how to dispose of them.

But the benefit of this minute system of culture extends still lower, and indeed is universally felt. Its main principle being to employ human labour, instead of studying how to dispense with it, there is still room for a class of society in rank below these little cultivators. There are labourers in the Netherlands, and if the reader had just risen from perusing the report of the condition of agricultural labourers in this country<sup>1</sup>, he would appreciate more fully some parts of the following picture, which I take from the last review, I believe, that has been taken of Flemish husbandry, and which is in the volume published by Mr. Radcliff, already frequently quoted. "It is a pleasure to observe the laborious industry of the Flemish farmer, recruited by intervals of comfortable and decent refreshment; and not less agreeable to perceive the farm servants treated with kindness and respect. They uniformly dine with the farmer and his family, at a clean table cloth, well supplied with spoons, with four-pronged forks, and every thing necessary to their convenience. In Flanders the gentlemen are all farmers, but the farmers do not aspire to be gentlemen, and their servants feel the benefit. They partake with them a plentiful and orderly meal, which varies according to circumstances. No farmer is without a well-cultivated garden, full of the best vegetables, which all appear at his own table; and apples are also introduced into their cookery. The farm servant par-

<sup>1</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Labourers' Wages ordered to be printed 4th June, 1824.



takes of his master's fare, excepting in his refreshments of tea, coffee, and beer. A peculiar cleanliness prevails about all their habitations, and the decencies of the table for the labourers, who sit down to a regular table cloth, furnished moderately with knives, but abundantly with forks and spoons, are uniformly observed. The labourer is in general very well able to support himself by his work: in a country where so much manual labour is required in weeding, the labourer's family is occupied pretty constantly in summer; and in winter they spin. EACH DAY-LABOURER HAS, IN MOST CASES, A SMALL QUANTITY OF LAND, FROM A ROOD TO HALF AN ACRE, FOR HIS OWN CULTIVATION<sup>1</sup>." And this is afforded to the labourer out of the minute farms of the Netherlands. Shame upon England, and upon many of its great proprietors and farmers! Mark the consequence! "In common times, a beggar is scarcely to be seen, except in the towns, and but few there. In the country, habits of industry are kept up till health fails, and, to meet the infirmities of age, the poor possess a revenue from pious donations" (long discouraged here, and even impeded by law, *because* we have poor laws), "regulated by the government, and vested by them in commissions, of which the mayors of the different communes are presidents respectively, in right of their office. The clothing of the peasantry is warm and comfortable: good shoes and stockings, and, frequently, gaiters of leather or strong linen. Their comfortable supply of linen is remarkable: there are few of the labouring classes without many changes.

<sup>1</sup> Radcliff, Report on the Agriculture of Flanders, p. 256.

In riding, with a landed proprietor, through a part of the country in which his property was situated, a neat cottage presented itself; a clipped hedge which surrounded the garden, covered with linen very white, suggested an inquiry ‘whether it did not belong to a washerwoman?’ The answer was short: ‘it was occupied by a labourer and his family, and that the linen was all their own.’ Any circumstance connected with the health, cleanliness and comfort of the lower classes is interesting, and to this of which we have been speaking, a particular degree of decency is attached. If the labourer is comfortable in point of apparel, the farmer is still more so. With respect to the farm-house, the exterior is, for the most part, ornamented with creepers, or fruit-trees trained against the walls; and within, the neatness which prevails is quite fascinating. Every article of furniture is polished, the service of pewter displays a peculiar brightness, and the tiled floor is purified with frequent ablutions. The cottage of the labourer, though not so well furnished, is as clean. The Flemish farmer seldom amasses riches, but is rarely afflicted with poverty; industry and frugality are his characteristics; he never looks beyond the enjoyment of moderate comforts; abstains from spirituous liquors, however easily to be procured; never exceeds his means; pays his rent punctually, and, in case of emergency, has always somewhat to command beyond his necessary disbursements<sup>1</sup>.”

I shall only quote another passage from this interesting author, which may leave more fully in the

<sup>1</sup> Radcliff, Report, &c., pp. 459, 461.

reader's mind the advantages of minute cultivation, reminding him that the same writer has stated, in common with all others, the land of the country to be naturally the reverse of rich; in fact, a bad soil<sup>1</sup>." Speaking of one of the departments, he says, "there are 461,659 souls upon 302,235 hectares, which are equal to 746,521 English acres, being about five souls to eight English acres. But the population," he adds, "is much more dense in other districts; in that of Bruges alone, at the rate of three souls to four acres; and in that of Courtray, at the rate of one to an English acre. Notwithstanding this, one-third of the produce of the land is annually exported! than which no circumstance can better mark the skill, the industry, and frugality of the Flemish farmer<sup>2</sup>."

(12.) In Great Britain, with all our boasted superiority in the soil and size of farms, and in the implements of agriculture, there are about forty acres to every ten souls, or twenty acres, probably, to every family throughout. But, perhaps, the mountainous districts of the north may prevent the comparison from being allowed. Well, then, to take Ireland, probably the richest soil of any country of equal extent in Europe, if not in the world, there are, including as before women and children in the calculation, nearly thirty acres for every ten persons: England and Wales have somewhat above. In a word, Ireland, in reference to its productive power, is much the worst peopled of any of the grand divisions of the kingdom.

And yet our Emigration Committee publish such a

<sup>1</sup> Radcliff, Report, &c. p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 271.

question as this, alluding to the small occupiers:—  
“Are you aware that the greater proportion consist of possessions not greater than an acre of ground?” To which Mr. Malthus replies affirmatively. As this is one of the pretended facts on which the scheme of publicly expatriating a part of the people, and privately clearing them, as it is termed, is evidently founded, it becomes necessary to examine it with some little attention.

(13.) The last Irish census furnishes us with two facts: one is, that the usual calculation of persons to a family is between five and six<sup>1</sup>; and the other, that much the greater number of the entire population are not employed as agriculturists, meaning by such, I presume, occupiers of land. In the summary of Ireland, which is placed at the conclusion of the Population Returns, the total number of persons occupied, exclusive, of course, of young children, &c., is stated to be 2,836,815; whereof 1,138,069 were engaged in agriculture; 1,170,044 in trades, manufactures, and handicrafts; and 528,702 in occupations different from the two former classes<sup>2</sup>. In the statistical returns of the barony of Rathvilly, being, I believe, the only part of Ireland the survey of which was completed, or, at least, published, agreeably to an order of the House of Commons, in the year 1825, we have some details more minutely given than in the general census. There we find it stated that the families average five and a half persons nearly; the number of souls 17,359; of whom forty-

<sup>1</sup> Abstract of the Population of Ireland, Prelim. Obs. p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 379.

eight per cent. of the employed were agriculturists, and fifty-two per cent. engaged in other pursuits. The area of the barony, in statute acres, is 49,745, or rather above the average density of population throughout the island, though there is not what can be called a town in the whole district. The number of farms is 1568, averaging, consequently, above thirty-one acres each. But the size of these vary as follows: there are 573 under five acres, 288 between five and ten, or, to calculate in English measure, eight and sixteen; 341 between sixteen and thirty-two; 288 between thirty-two and eighty-one; 49 between eighty-one and 162; and 29 upwards of 162 acres each<sup>1</sup>. It is evident, from this statement, that the greater proportion of cultivators who are not in possession of more than an acre of ground, must be sought for in the first class, and, as we find in the same document that there are 516 freeholders of 40s. each, we should not err much in assuming that number to be principally made up of those whom the question put by the committee points at. But, to allow the utmost latitude to those who labour to make out so strong a case against the little cultivators of Ireland, supposing we deduct, for the first 573, two acres and a half of land each, there remains of land in the barony 48,313, to be divided amongst the remaining 995 farmers, leaving nearly fifty acres for each farm; deducting, however, about eight per cent., which, it appears, is the proportion not at present cultivated. This size is evidently far larger than the average one in the better parts of the Netherlands,

<sup>1</sup> Statistical Returns, Barony of Rathvilly, p. 53.

and is, as we observe, varied, from the smallest class up to those of a larger extent, in many instances, than the laws and customs of that country would allow. These gradations, however, have a most beneficial tendency, affording to the meritorious the means of advancement in life, and that hope of it which is the mainspring of all human exertion. A system like this, placed upon the basis of a labouring peasantry, who have themselves a little holding, and who, in addition to the employment it affords, would be fully engaged, if the possessor of the soil were where they ought to be, seems to be that of the agriculture of the Netherlands, upon, perhaps, a somewhat larger scale ; and a more beneficial or happy one cannot possibly be imagined. Wherever it is found connected with general suffering and distress, the cause of the latter is not to be sought for in the size of farms, and must be remedied, if it is to be redressed, by very different means than clearing either them or the country of their inhabitants.

I think the above calculations, taken from the barony of Rathvilly, may be fairly enough extended to all Ireland. Taking the rural population at about five millions, which I should think too high a proportion of the whole, at least as far as can be judged from the face of the census, about 455,000 would be the number of farmers, supposing there were the same proportion in that occupation as in the barony of Rathvilly : of these again, perhaps 166,000 may be the little cottage cultivators before spoken of, to whom we allotted two and a half instead of a single acre of ground : the remainder, it will be found, would have



upwards of forty acres of cultivated land each, independently of a share in the 4,900,000 acres which, it appears, are in occupation at present (though not in a productive state), as they have now an annual value fixed upon them. This addition would average the farms at nearly sixty acres each. But I am, however, persuaded this calculation is much underrated, as it is plain, from the census, that the number of the agriculturists, as given above, is exaggerated. And as they have not, generally speaking, capital enough to cultivate farms of the average extent mentioned, nor ever will, while absenteeism and underletting prevails, it follows that there must be many farms of a very great size in Ireland; and such, however the fact is kept out of sight, is positively the case, and to a lamentable extent.

But to lay no stress whatever upon the foregoing calculations, as founded upon a particular district of Ireland, which I have not seen, and which may, for aught I know, be a contrast to the rest; and returning, in order to avoid all cavil whatsoever, to the naked fact:—there are in Ireland 6,801,821 persons: calculating that there are between five and six persons to every family; and supposing that there were neither town nor city in the whole island—that there were no manner of employment or pursuit but agriculture, there are still ten acres of the most fertile land in the world to each family, one acre of which, we are assured on all hands, would far more than suffice for the sustenance of each, as they are content to live, and after all only two-thirds of the island is as yet under culture.

(14.) Now, in the Report on the State of Ireland, there occurs a description, given by an intelligent witness of the condition of the farmers, not being manufacturers, of Downshire (one of the most thickly-peopled counties in the country) who are in possession of about this quantity of land, ten acres<sup>1</sup> each, on an average. But they are fairly dealt by, and hold directly from the proprietors<sup>2</sup>; their situation, consequently, is this: they eat animal food<sup>3</sup>; build slated houses<sup>4</sup> (a great distinction in Ireland); their furniture is decent and abundant<sup>5</sup>; and, finally, many of them have saved very considerable sums of money<sup>6</sup>. As to the labourers, they are represented to be in regular employment<sup>7</sup>, and are paid in money<sup>8</sup>. In the county of Down there are 367 souls on the square mile (English); in Galway, incontestibly the most wretched and least-populated part of Ireland, just one-third that number. It is erroneous, then, to attribute the misery and distress of Ireland to the density of its population: the converse of this notion is true of the country throughout, as will be shown hereafter. But to return to the farmers. The "potatoe system," therefore, is not chargeable upon marriage, nor population, nor small farms; but upon absenteeism, its desertions, its wholesale lettings, its exorbitant, indeed incredible, rents; and the clearings and drivings it occasions; and yet these last, and emigration, are reckoned the only remedies for the sufferings of the people.

<sup>1</sup> Report on the State of Ireland, 1825, First Part; Mr. Hugh Wallace's (banker and solicitor) Evidence, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 148.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 150.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 150.    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 149.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 150, p. 151.    <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 149.    <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 149.

(15.) But the average size of the farms of Ireland, as we have seen, are necessarily far greater than these. To ascribe, therefore, its evils to a redundant population, in the proper sense of the term, is as plain an insult upon truth, as it would be to attribute those felt generations ago, when there were sixty acres of land to every family, to the same act of Divine Providence. These distresses will remain till their prime cause shall cease; till they shall be no longer deserted and oppressed. They have, alas! long been “a people scattered and peeled; meted out and trodden underfoot;” and it is not by burning their cottages, and driving them into exile, that they are to be relieved. In the instance of the Netherlands has been shown the condition in which Ireland might have been placed, had she been properly treated; the condition to which she may yet attain, if her wrongs are redressed, and she should no longer be the tributary of distant oppression; but see her exactors changed for kind, benevolent, and resident landlords. A lovely picture rises in one’s imagination, in contemplating what might be the result; it has been already touched by her own inimitable poet, when treating on the very subject, in his *Deserted Village*; the secret of the exquisite pathos of which is, simply, its truth; and, alas! it has the inspiration of prophecy as well as of poetry. But our poets have sung, and our moralists pleaded in vain; even the solemn denunciations of our religion, in all instances the religion of benevolence, and the assertor of the rights of unprotected poverty, have been utterly disregarded. “Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place,

that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!" was the malediction of the sublimest of the prophets of Israel, a country thrice as densely peopled as Ireland, even on the authority of profane history ; and which, nevertheless, enjoyed the greatest abundance in consequence of being guarded against ruinous monopolies by the sacred institutions of its GOD : I say ruinous, for so they still are to thousands upon thousands of poor wretches who have been, and are about to become, their victims. One of the milder of the methods to get rid of the superfluous population of Ireland, is, I perceive, to impose a tax upon cottages: Mr. Malthus is asked whether the legislature would be justified in some distinct measure of that kind ; to which he responds in the affirmative<sup>1</sup>. The man, however, who shall make so nefarious a proposal, will be "distinct" enough ; and should it be made and passed, it would require only a single clause to render it palatable to the country at large, namely, that its proposers and abettors should be the sole gatherers of the impost ; it would be a disgrace to a civilized country to have to collect an assessment, especially one of so equitable and merciful a nature, at the point of the bayonet. The consequences I do not mean to disguise, and I hope it will be deemed no greater offence to imagine the loss of a thousand political economists for the public good, than it is for Mr. Malthus to pronounce the demise of a thousand labourers in the same cause, as "a gain certainly<sup>2</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Emigration Committee, Third Report, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Emigration Committee, Rev. T. R. Malthus's Evidence, p. 314.

But we are neither of us in earnest: “No, no, we do but jest, murder in jest, no offence i’ th’ world. (*Pours the poison into his ears*<sup>1</sup>.)”—But, seriously; a principle which can coolly argue, even *ex hypothesi*, that putting out of existence a thousand labourers, would be “certainly a gain” in any point of view, is one that is not likely to remain a dead letter; it will act as far as it dare: and what sort of a figure does it cut in the eye of philosophy, of philanthropy, of religion? Every one of these thousand is as plainly called to fill the station he holds in creation as the proudest mortal in it; and notwithstanding he is audaciously told to the contrary, “he *has* a right to be where he is<sup>2</sup>,” an infinitely wise Providence, who called him into the world, has visibly assigned him his place in it; and to assert or act upon the contrary notion is unjust in the name of humanity, and false in the name of God!

Touching all subjects connected with human morals and conduct, we may rest assured of every system, which holds that we may do evil that good may come, that its “damnation is just.” We are unfitted by our very nature for the regimen of any such principle, being, on the one hand, too ignorant of future contingencies, and, on the other, too partial in our mode of judging of them, were they known to us, to qualify us for this mode of determining the moral quality of human actions. Hence we are favoured with far surer guides, the feelings of humanity, and the dictates of religion; and happily the experience of the human race has found these to be unerring. The more perfectly they have been obeyed, either by individuals or

<sup>1</sup> Hamlet.<sup>2</sup> Malthus, *Essay on Pop.*, 4to, p. 531.

communities, the more happy and prosperous have all such permanently become. But the rule of political economy is founded on ignorant selfishness: it has been too long applied to Ireland, and we see with what success. Try another: even the golden rule—Do to her as you would be done by. Then would there be a resident gentry, fair and moderate rents, general industry, grateful and gratified feelings, obedience to the laws—in a word, a happy and contented country, smiling with universal cultivation. These would assuredly heal the breaches of that unhappy people far better than the creation of a “vacuum,” again to use the current phrase of the day, by desolation and destruction. Then, though her sons should still “grow up as young plants, and her daughters as the polished corners of the temple; her garners would be full and plenteous with all manner of store, and her sheep would bring forth by thousands and ten thousands. Then should there be no decay; no breaking in, nor going out; no leading into captivity”—no emigration—“no complaining in her streets.” In contradiction to the doctrine of all the economists upon earth, this has been the case wherever human industry has been duly fostered and cherished, and population has been allowed to proceed with those natural advantages which the Deity evidently intended it should possess in its wonder-working career. “Happy are the people that are in such a case!”

(16.) In dwelling upon the nefarious project of clearing lands and destroying habitations, perhaps some severity of language has been used, which I take the occasion to say I do not direct personally



against such who may have thoughtlessly given into the practice ; some of these, I am willing to hope, and do indeed believe, have taken so singular a view of the subject, as to have construed it into benevolence, and have acted upon it with that feeling. Such I have only to refer to the foregoing rule, as the touchstone of their conduct, and ask them whether, were they the little cultivator, they would like to be ejected from the home of their forefathers, sent forth with their families, whatever their age, as fugitives and vagabonds, without employment or prospect of any, and more unhappy than the beasts of the field or the birds of the air, not having where to lay their head ? As to the prime promoters of and actors in such proceedings, who glory in their shame, no language can sufficiently express the turpitude of their conduct : I am persuaded none can reach their feelings, otherwise I would attempt to bring before their recollection the numerous train of victims they have already sacrificed to their selfishness : the happiness they have destroyed (for they are not uninformed that happiness may reside in a cottage, and even preside over the potatoe meal to which their rapacity has reduced the inmates) ; the misery they have created ; the premature deaths which have ensued, touching which it is for GOD to decide whether they will be held guiltless. I might summon from the grave, as witnesses against them and their system, those who, either in the old world or the new, have found that their sole refuge against both : nay, that the sea might yield up of its dead, the multitudes of such who have expired by the sufferings of their passage in escaping oppression, or

by the hardships they had afterwards to encounter. But no ! with these, “ the tyranny is overpast.” Let then the surviving and far more pitiable victims of their policy pass in melancholy array before them ; the wrecks of human happiness, unutterably miserable both in appearance and reality, whose sufferings every where excite the commiseration of strangers, let these

“ Come like shadows and depart,  
Show their eyes and grieve their heart !”

But their eyes are perhaps in the ends of the earth ; and as to grieving their heart !—

I have been often at a loss to explain satisfactorily to myself why we are invariably more affected by a single case of human misery, than by a number of such pressed at once upon our consideration ; yet such, I fear, is the fact. Sure am I, at all events, that particular individual instances that could be adduced, of the sufferings to which this driving system has led, would rouse the feelings of a humane reader far more than any general representations upon the subject, however just. My objection against the practice of engrossing lands, from its very commencement, and through every stage, is perhaps the stronger, because I have seen a few of its victims in this country, who, from a station of modest frugality and comfort, have had to turn into the parish work-house, where they have lingered awhile, mourning over past days, and spent the clouded evening of life amongst strangers and profligates ; and under the protection of that amiable personage, the farmer of the poor ; an officer that ought instantly to be put down amongst us by

law. But what is the condition of the ejected Irish tenant? There is no employment for him to resort to, as is happily often the case here; that the absentee proprietors effectually prevent. There are no poor laws, obliging the man who creates the misery to assist in mitigating it, otherwise he would frequently pause in his purpose: the law imposes no such duty upon him; the very case we are contemplating shows how perfectly he avails himself of the immunity, and it brands with falsehood and folly the perpetually repeated assurance, that private charity would fully compensate, and in a better mode, for the destruction of our public provision for the poor. The desolate wretch is, therefore, driven under such circumstances to desperation, and, connected with a multitude of others similarly treated, proceeds to those acts of violence, already noticed as so frequent in Ireland; otherwise he resigns himself to his melancholy fate, and bears his sufferings in silence. I shall not speedily forget a person accidentally falling in with one of these, lying, where he passed, by the road side, with a female infant in his arms, both of them very destitute of raiment, and evidently suffering from want. He learnt, that he was one of those that had been "cleared;" his wife, however, had died under the operation, and was, therefore, left in her native earth. He had no home, but was come to work in the harvest of England, and thought he could safely lay his child in the field beside him, while he laboured. The story of his destruction is not easy to be forgotten, and the name, the sounding, patriotic, noble name, connected with it, never. His present distress was relieved, and but moderately, and

it is mentioned only to describe the agony of gratitude with which he received the alms, and which made a more powerful impression as to his utter and hopeless destitution, than the distressing story he had told. Wherever he may be at this moment, I had rather be him than his oppressor<sup>1</sup>. One such act suffices to make a human monster ; a multitude of them—a political economist. Had I been that great individual, whoever was the promoter or the apologist, or whatever the temptation, rather than to have quenched the fires of those now desolate hearths, where they had long cheered and illuminated a circle of the social virtues, and a scene of human happiness, in however lowly a sphere ; or than have demolished those humble abodes of peace and love ; my own paternal roof should have fallen upon and crushed me, and the lamp of life have become extinguished in my own bosom for ever !—“ Yet Brutus is an honourable man ; so are they all, all honourable men !”

I cannot impress too strongly upon the reader's mind the difference between this kind of conduct in Ireland and in England ; in the former country it amounts to unmingled cruelty and oppression ; the sufferers are expelled and done with for ever<sup>2</sup> : in

<sup>1</sup> The language of the Irishman, culpable as it was, is not easy to be forgotten ; “ If there be a God, he cannot help but kill him !” Only imagine a moving multitude thus suffering, and thus feeling, and the insubordinations and blood-shedding of Ireland is explained.

<sup>2</sup> “ The landlord in Ireland has greater power than in any other state I know ; he is not bound to protect the tenant in case of distress or starvation, as he is in England, or in the countries, such as Livonia and Germany, where they cultivate the land by predial slaves, or as the negro slaves in the West Indies.”—(Minutes of Evidence on the Disturbances, &c. in Ireland ; A. Nimmo, Esq., p. 290.)

England, however, the proprietor who so acts knows that those whom he expels he has still to maintain, if they cannot procure other employment. But even this consideration does not fully absolve the latter in having adopted the modern agricultural policy: much private suffering, and, as I contend, public distress, have been its results; while the contrary conduct is that of undoubted and manifest benevolence, augmenting and multiplying happiness and independence, wherever it extends. So true and apparent is this, that our great and judicious moralist, Paley, after enumerating many acts of benevolence which the proprietors of estates are called upon to discharge, particularises “the establishment of families, which,” says he, “is one of the noblest purposes to which the rich and great can convert their endeavours, by *building*” (not destroying) “cottages, and *SPLITTING*” (not engrossing) “farms<sup>1</sup>.”

(17.) I might here again plead the interests of the English agriculturists against this notable scheme of thinning Ireland by emigration and monopoly, the object of which, however disguised, is to obtain for the proprietors a still greater “surplus produce,” which would be inevitably poured into this country; but I forbear. In closing my remarks upon the poverty and sufferings of Ireland, as occasioned by absenteeism, and all its train of fatal and disgusting consequences, and the still more revolting expedients, which it seems now the fashion to represent as the sole means of serving that country, founded on the palpable error of supposing that all the wrongs she

<sup>1</sup> Paley, Moral Philosophy, p. 159.

suffers spring from an overgrown population (an opinion founded in utter ignorance, and, indeed, in defiance of recorded facts), I would put a plain question or two. Is a system, which can only be supported by brute force, and is kept up by constant bloodshedding, to be perpetuated for ever? Are we still to garrison a defenceless country in behalf of those whose property was, generally speaking, originally conferred on the special condition of residence, but whose desertion occasions all the evils under which she has groaned for centuries?—property so treated, that it would not be worth a day's purchase were the proprietors its sole protectors. But they are aware that their absence is balanced by the presence of a body of military and police, which enables them to conduct themselves with as little apprehension as remorse. The possessions of the entire empire would be lost to their owners, were such conduct general; and are these so meritorious a class, that their utmost demands are to be extorted from a distant and suffering country, and themselves protected in the open neglect, or rather audacious outrage, of all those duties, on the due and reciprocal discharge of which the whole frame of the social system is founded? If they persist in this course, let them do so, but let it be at their proper peril! Let them urge their own claims, and defend their own outrages: the British soldier, who is ready to bleed in the battle in which his country's interest or honour is at stake, is too noble a being, methinks, to be degraded virtually into the exactor of the enormous rents of the absentee, which his desertion often incapacitates the



wretched tenants from discharging, or to “clear” his estates of human beings, when it may please him to utter the fiat from afar<sup>1</sup>. I say I would leave them to settle this as they could, only that it would be practically difficult to sever their case from such as had fair claims upon public protection. Methinks the indignation of many may be roused at this view of the subject, who may have, nevertheless, read with the utmost degree of composure, and indeed complacency, the modern proposition of taking away the sole right of the poor to any portion of the property of the country,—a right confined in its exercise to seasons of personal destitution and distress; solemnly awarded by the legislature, and evidently conferred in lieu of a still more ancient and ample one; a right which has been exercised for ages, and confirmed by hundreds of acts of parliament; and which has the sanction of natural justice, and the commands of God in its favour. Mr. Malthus calls an intimation of thus sweeping away the “right of the poor,” without any idea of offering the least equivalent, or proposing any substitute, “fair notice.” No such measures are contemplated respecting the culpable class alluded to, though I dare say enough has been said to rouse the feelings of wealth and its panders, the political economists. I would protect every man in the enjoyment of his just rights, but I would discourage him in the perpetration of wrongs.

<sup>1</sup> This “has led to a great deal of misery; lately to murder, burning of houses, and several other outrages; and at Croom there was some difficulty in getting the tenants out, and the military were obliged to be called in.”—(Major-General R. Bourk, third Report, p. 313, 314.)

One thing is certain, Ireland is not to be treated as it has been. Should it be conceived that too severe a view is taken, in the preceding pages, of the consequences of absenteeism, as occasioning, not only the distresses, but the disorders of Ireland, which are so frequently occurring, and which are invariably attended with fatal consequences, I must appeal to the reports of the legislature on this subject, and to the legal authorities who have had to administer justice on occasion of these disturbances, and who have given evidence on these afflicting subjects. The evils absenteeism inflicts have been often concealed; never exaggerated<sup>1</sup>.

§ IX. (1.) I have been upon a gloomy topic, and have dwelt the longer upon it from the humble hope that something perhaps might be offered which might assist in averting the fate which awaits many of our unhappy fellow-subjects in Ireland, if the present schemes are put into execution. The next proposi-

<sup>1</sup> "The parts with which I am acquainted, the principal gentry have deserted: they have become absentees, and I am sure I ought not to have omitted to enumerate that as a principal cause of the disorderly state of the disturbed counties, &c."—(John Lloyd, Esq., sergeant at law; Minutes of Evidence, House of Lords, p. 207.)

"As to the state of Ireland, any view I suggest would be incomplete, without stating the effects of absenteeism. My opinion is, that, independent of its abstraction from the country of so much of its wealth, it produces great mischief to the whole frame of society; in Ireland, I may say, there is the destitution, the want, of a distinct class. In ordinary times the loss of influence and authority, and the control which belongs to education, to rank, and to property, must be deeply felt in any country: but when it becomes disturbed, I need not say that that which would form the barrier for the protection of the peace, is lost in Ireland; and I have now been administering the insurrection act in counties where the property of absentees is extensive."—(F. Blackburn, Esq., *ibid.* p. 8.)

tion of the new school in her favour, now about to be considered, is calculated to dissipate the melancholy feelings which may have been excited, and to change them into others of a risible nature. It is to relieve Ireland by giving the people a taste for superior living; and most assuredly a more agreeable proposition was never made. A lesson more easy to teach, or pleasing to learn, was rarely propounded: few Irishmen are there that do not bid fair to be apt scholars at a very few lessons. The political quacks have for once hit upon a happy, and, I think, efficacious remedy; it only remains that they should furnish the materials of their prescription, and the cure would be certain. But, alas! instead of doing thus, our empirics and their confederates would only act as the political Dr. Snatchaways of Ireland; they would tantalize the country with a sight of what they do not permit them to taste, or, giving them a taste, they would not allow them a meal; merely enough to render the homely provision to which they are condemned still more unpalatable. Give the country the means of comfortable subsistence, and, rest assured, the "taste" for it will follow, as a matter of course. But a taste of this nature, without the possibility of gratifying it, instead of a blessing, would be the greatest curse to the people. Before the use of the potatoe was generally introduced, which now serves as a subject of ignorant declamation, we know that the population had as great a taste for, but as little a taste of, animal food, as they have at present; probably even less. But the circumstances of the country in regard to its exports, both at that period and

the present, fully show to what it is the spare diet of the Irish is owing. If those who conceive this proposition is worthy of consideration (and such appear to be numerous since the discovery was made by the great Ricardo), would please to turn their attention to the list of Irish exports, they will see, both by their nature and extent, that the means of comfortable subsistence are withdrawn; their flour and wheat, their butter, and beef and pork, are demanded by these absentees, to distribute in foreign nations: they would then, one would think, see it their duty to exhort such to allow them a taste, rather than busy themselves in such a work of supererogation, as teaching the poor Irish to acquire one. But, no; they have pronounced in effect that such remittances to absentee proprietors are not in the least detrimental: merely a taste is what Ireland wants. I am, however, for giving this taste, and gratifying it; first, by inducing the absentee landlords to return to their property and country, and expend in Ireland the sums, or, in other words, cause the provisions to be enjoyed there which they are the direct means of causing to be transported, distributed, and consumed elsewhere:—secondly, by the return of such, giving a spur to every species of national industry, and by their example as proprietors, establishing a better system, as it respects their oppressed tenantry, and not being the first to “squeeze their enormous rents out of the very blood, and vitals, and clothes, and dwellings of their tenants, who live worse than English beggars<sup>1</sup>.” Another quotation this, of a century

<sup>1</sup> Dean Swift, *View of the State of Ireland*, vol. vi. p. 159.

old, which may again jog the memory of those who, in dozing over these pages, may dream that the miseries of Ireland are doubtless owing to its six millions of inhabitants.

These doctrines will, doubtless, be very unpalatable and unpopular amongst those to whom they are addressed, while those for whose benefit they are solely intended will never hear of them. But, amidst the pure incense which political economy is breathing at the shrine of wealth, a puff like this can never be perceived, nor can one or two discordant voices disturb the interesting harmony of the orthodox and devoted worshippers.

(2.) But I must, in fairness, add, in reference to this proposition, that the intention of its propounders is meant to work a cure for the sufferings of Ireland, by giving her people a taste for good living in preference to matrimony; or, practically speaking, to induce them to exchange chaste living for good eating. It is supposed that the progress of population would be thus checked, and the number of births diminished—a mistake attended to elsewhere. I shall now only observe, on this subject, that, before the proposition can be entertained, it must be proved, instead of asserted, that the evils of Ireland arise from excessive numbers. This, however, can never be done without disposing entirely of every period of its past history. I must again repeat, that what Ireland now suffers is but the continuation of evils which were as deeply and universally felt when the population was notoriously scanty. At present, indeed, we are told that the Irish “propagate like brute beasts;”

which expression, if it mean that they do not regard the preventive check, is, I believe, pretty true, as it likewise would be if applied to almost every country of Europe. But, in any other point of view, the accusation is probably more false as it regards them than almost any other people upon earth ; whatever be their national failings, promiscuous connexion between the sexes is not one of them ; there is, probably, less of improper intercourse before marriage, and more fidelity afterwards, than in any other part of the empire, or of the world. In the proper meaning of the term, the accusation is as false as it is indecent ; the indignant Irish might well retort, upon a system which thus insults them, charges far more foul, though much less false ; not, indeed, that it teaches its votaries to propagate like “ brute beasts,” but that, by inducing them to abstain from “ propagation,” it leads to vices of which brute beasts are incapable, vices

“ Most foul, strange, and unnatural !”

Even now “ the infection works ;” I have seen several works on the principle of population, in which the most disgusting expedients are darkly hinted at, or directly explained, as methods of repressing “ the evils it occasions.” But these proofs of the iniquitous tendency of such a doctrine are redundant. Let the new school only discourage matrimony—that state which our religion solemnly pronounces as honourable in ALL, in whatever rank or station<sup>1</sup> ; and which the church, of which some of our political

<sup>1</sup> “ Is not marriage honourable in a beggar ?”—*Shakespeare*.



moralists are ministers, expressly calls holy, and as plainly declares to be necessary ; and not only universal licentiousness of manners, but other evils, of a darker and more disgusting nature, would follow of course. A world six thousand years old is no novice in these matters, and its history shows that, wherever and whenever marriage has been slighted, then and there have the foulest crimes been introduced and practised with impunity, which, as Gibbon himself confesses, it was the glory of Christianity to repress, and by restoring the dignity of that state. Again lower that dignity, declare marriage to be “ clearly an immoral act,” without such and such prospects, and the consequences are certain ; the least fearful of which are that guilt and suffering which a general corruption of manners would occasion. I speak warily ; innumerable authorities would sanction me in stating all I have said in far stronger terms. The British legislature has proclaimed that “ great and manifold inconveniences, *not to be named*, have followed of constrained celibacy ;” and, in the language of one of its greatest ornaments, in anticipating all these hateful consequences—I say, “ such would, and, in no long time, must be, the effect of attempting to forbid as a crime, and to suppress as an evil, the command and blessing of Providence,—increase and multiply :” or, to use the language of a greater than Burke, “ forbidding to marry is the doctrine of devils.”

On the impolicy, the injustice, the cruelty, of directly or indirectly discouraging marriage amongst the poor (a favourite idea with our modern eco-

nomists), as well as on the futility of all such attempts, I have spoken at large elsewhere, and shall not, therefore, enter at present on these important topics.

(4.) But supposing our political economists could succeed in their endeavours regarding Ireland, and that the Irish, instead of “propagating like brute beasts,” could be induced to propagate like angels, that is, not at all ; and that to remedy the consequence of such a state of voluntary sterility, Providence should please to realize, in behalf of our Irish proprietors, the fable of Dean Swift’s *Struldbrugs*, and make a sufficient number of these unincumbered cultivators immortal ; is there, I would seriously ask those acquainted with the real state of things in Ireland, the slightest ground to believe that the advantage of such a change would not to the last farthing, and to the value of the minutest grain, find its way into the pockets of the landed proprietors, not in the least benefiting the cultivators, who would still be confined to the barest possible maintenance ? And what if it should please Providence to constitute at the same time the rest of mankind *Struldbrugs*, diminishing the mouths of the consumers of Irish produce just in the same proportion as the mouths of the producers, will the proposers of such a plan point out its benefit to either party ?

§ X. (1.) The last proposition of some of our political projectors in favour of Ireland is what I have termed an ecclesiastical confiscation. In discussing this, I shall not say a word upon the much agitated question,

Catholic emancipation, further than to remark that it is a measure perfectly distinct from any of the propositions I shall bring forward in favour of Ireland, and as such I leave it to be argued on its own grounds. It is one, moreover, which, granting it all the importance attached to it by its ablest advocates, falls far short, even in promise, of attempting that in behalf of the country which ought to be accomplished, and without delay. It is obvious that it could not have the effect of increasing the products of the soil, or of distributing them more plentifully amongst the population. Privileges, however regulated, the exercise of which appertain practically only to the few, can never feed a starving people. Emancipation of another kind is what Ireland must sooner or later obtain, which I fear is too often lost sight of in the continued discussion of that question, or intentionally made, by some engaged in it, the cover for the negligence or oppression of those who are connected with Ireland, and with the wrongs of Ireland. But the farce of patriotism cannot be carried on for ever, by means of a few cheap votes and declamations, sincere or otherwise. Such political pharisees, out of the luxuriant crop of their liberality, may pay tithe of their mint and anise and cumin ; but they omit, in their treatment of this unhappy people, the weightier matters of the law of real patriotism, judgment, mercy, and truth. These observations, I repeat, have not the slightest reference to that question, and are even in strict accordance with the opinions of some of its warmest supporters.

The proposition to which I allude is the confisca-

tion of the property of the Irish church, which some are beginning to hint at, if not propose ; and which many more secretly cherish as a cure for the sufferings of Ireland, or rather of the poor of Ireland. How ignorantly, I ought perhaps rather to say, how selfishly, such reason, a very little examination will suffice to show. Deferring for a moment the consideration of the mode in which that part of the church rental which consists of tithes, is at present collected, I shall now contend that, while the ownership of such property by the clergy is, generally speaking, no detriment to the Irish cultivator, supposing his landlord to have a spark of honesty ; it is, on the other hand, an actual advantage to the country at large,—assertions which perhaps may at first startle some, but which are nevertheless true. None can be so weak as to suppose, that were the tithes of Ireland abolished to-morrow, and all the glebe lands of the country confiscated, the spoil would be bestowed on the wretched cultivators. However it should be disposed of, they would have no share ; and as surely as every landlord in the empire lets tithe-free land at a proportionably higher rate than titheable, so certainly would the rent of the land thus exonerated be advanced to the full amount of the difference ; nay, I believe, frequently far beyond that amount ; the ecclesiastical proprietor generally consenting to accept much less for his rights, that is, his proportion of the property, than the lay one does, or would consent to do. It must be well known to every one, that a branch of the Irish legislature passed long ago a resolution exonerating all the island from agistment tithe ; an act of audacious spoliation seldom ex-

amplified, in the advantages of which the little cultivator never did nor ever will share : the Irish clergy, therefore, who many of them possess very little glebe, were thrown solely on the tithe of the arable land for their support. Turning again to the barony of Rathvilly, I find that, out of the 49,745 English acres, of which the barony consists, there are but sixty-five acres of glebe. I believe it is reckoned one of the most fertile in the country : the whole appears to be titheable ; the total amount of the tithes is £3156. 9s. 7½d., or nearly fifteen-pence farthing per acre, or, as the report states it in Irish measure, two shillings and a halfpenny. Now as the average produce of that quantity, in Winchester measure, throughout the island, is stated to be, of wheat upwards of thirty-three bushels ; of bere, sixty-nine ; of barley, fifty-four ; of oats seventy-two, and upwards ; and of potatoes, more than 22,094 pounds, I leave the reader to draw his own conclusions as to the rapacity of the ecclesiastical proprietors.

But, if these fifteen pence an English acre, on all the cultivated lands of Ireland, supposing tithes to amount to that sum throughout<sup>1</sup>, were wrested from the incumbents ; can any one, I repeat the question, be weak enough to suppose that it would be presented to the occupier as a bonus ? Wealth has always a tendency to accumulate into large masses ; but whatever became of these fractions of it, we may be very certain that none of them would rest with the inmate

<sup>1</sup> I think the evidences, in some of the Reports on Ireland, state the average as much lower where commutations have taken place.

of the Irish cabin. In point of fact, too many of the landlords of Ireland, and more especially the sub-landlords, the middlemen, as they are called, are so eager to wring all they can from the cultivators, that the clergyman is often actually defrauded of his maintenance, from the utter impossibility of the little tenant paying him his tithe-rent, after having satisfied the larger exactions to which he is subject, and which are rarely mitigated. If a full and adequate allowance is not made, in respect to the tithe, I say the landlord, and not the clergyman, is the real oppressor, while the latter, in virtue of his equally legal and more ancient right, insists upon his income in the only way in which he can obtain it. Perhaps a more flagrant instance of profound ignorance, or rather selfishness, cannot be imagined, than that some of the Irish proprietors, a vast majority of whom are Protestants, and who, in most cases, received their estates for the very purpose of supporting that religion, should talk about the hardship of tithes, and not talk only, but throw the burden upon their poor Catholic tenants. Why, the titles of their own estates, in many cases, rest upon what they would fain represent as injustice and oppression ; they were, in very truth, bestowed for the purpose and on the condition of supporting the religion which they desert, as far as their personal presence and influence goes, inveighing against parting with that small portion of them which was at the same time reserved as a maintenance for those who are to this hour discharging the duties imposed upon them in reference to it. Most of the property of Ireland is of this protestant pedigree, though some of it would



now, it seems, be very glad to bastardize its ancestry; but it would be curious enough if such would plainly set forth the superior nature of their claims, contrasted with those of the ecclesiastical proprietors. It would be unique, as a legal as well as a moral demonstration, to show that, whereas their title is in the full bloom and vigour of perpetual youth, that of these spiritual persons is actually become superannuated, and ought to be allowed to expire as soon as possible. If the large proprietors of Irish estates, or those who possess property transmitted through such, are not tired of their titles and possessions, it would be advisable in them to discuss the rightful claims to the ecclesiastical property of the country in a very different spirit.

(2.) But if the cultivators are not injured by ecclesiastical persons owning a part of the joint property of the country, excepting so far as the lay proprietor is accessory to the abuse sometimes occasioned; the public at large are highly benefited by the circumstance. The church property, were it seized, would inevitably find its way into the possession of the great proprietors; and of these, as certainly, a large proportion would be absentees,—causing another immense sum to be added to that which is at present abstracted from the country, and expended elsewhere, still increasing the evils of that absenteeism, which is the curse of Ireland.

(3.) Here, I am aware, I shall be answered, that the Irish clergy are many of them absentees. I meet the assertion by a direct denial; and I do it on the authority of the official returns, relative to the clergy

of Ireland, published by the House of Commons, in 1824. These returns, not having been called for with any view to determining the point I am considering, nor being very uniform as to the mode in which they are drawn up, I am prevented from presenting a minute account of the number of ecclesiastics absent from the country. From turning, however, to those dioceses, where the actual residence of the clergy is particularized, it is plain that such must be very few indeed. It does not appear to me that there are a dozen regularly resident in England, nor half that number upon the Continent. Whether they reside on their respective livings, or supply their places by resident curates, it is wide of my purpose to inquire, but which it behoves, I think, some of those who make public statements on the subject, to examine into a little more narrowly, before they pronounce so calumniously, as I fear they do, upon this subject.

(4.) It may, therefore, be pronounced, that the clergy of Ireland are discharging their duty more completely and beneficially to the country, than any class of the gentry it contains, or rather that it ought to contain; for I presume we may still venture to call men of their education, and connexions, and manners, gentlemen. And their influence on society, notwithstanding it is grievously lessened by their being in great measure deserted by the laity of their own station, is still more beneficial even than the expenditure of their whole income in the country. One of the government inspectors, on a late trying occasion, Major Woodward, having traversed nearly the whole of the most distressed districts of Ireland, thus ex-

presses himself: "I must, as a public officer, whose duties call him into close contact with them (the clergy) throughout the most remote, and (by all others of the higher classes) deserted parts of the kingdom, declare, in common justice, that, were it not for the residence and moral and political influence of the parochial clergy, every trace of refinement and civilization would disappear<sup>1</sup>." But I shall pass over the advantage to every community of having persons distributed through it, of extensive learning and liberal manners, and, above all, of christian principles and demeanour; which, notwithstanding the sneers with which the profession is often assailed, is its great and general characteristic; and shall only fix upon their conduct in seasons of general distress, instancing, at present, that of the late fatal dearth and epidemic—a time, indeed, which put to the test the immeasurable distance between real and pretended patriotism. At that period, when, as its able and feeling historians record, the evils of the non-residence of the proprietors was so deeply felt<sup>2</sup>, the conduct of the clergy, both bishops and inferior orders, was beyond all praise<sup>3</sup>; many of the latter, we are informed, fell victims to the unremitted discharge of their sacred and benevolent duties<sup>4</sup>. I trust, such at least have expiated the offence of having subsisted upon a share of the landed property of the country, and a grievous one it is in the estimation of many an absentee.

<sup>1</sup> Major Woodward, Speech of Bishop of Limerick, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Baker and Cheyne, Account of the Fever in Ireland, vol. ii. pp. 35, 76, 100, 125, 138, 168, 338.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 76, 84, 89, 100, 101, 103, 105, 138, 336.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 42.

(5.) I will not disguise, that some of the preceding observations have been suggested to my mind, by reading the attacks, in both houses of Parliament, made upon the clergy, and especially the Irish clergy. One gentleman, if I remember right, selected the archiepiscopal see of Armagh as the subject matter of his declamation ; I shall make no allusion to the nature of his mis-statements, those I believe were sufficiently exposed at the time. I shall only take up that part of the question which I am discussing, namely, whether church property is not at present in far better hands, as it regards the interests of Ireland, and of the poor of Ireland especially, than it would be if some of our projectors had their way. I shall not attempt to flatter any living prelate, though several of them are at this instant engaged in works of extensive benevolence, but, purposely taking the instance selected for the attack, shall quote Arthur Young's *Tour in Ireland*, which now lies before me, in reference to that see. This is an extract from his journal : "Reached Armagh in the evening : waited on the primate. July 23rd, his Grace rode out with me to Armagh, and showed me some of the noble and spirited works by which he has perfectly changed the face of the neighbourhood. The buildings he has erected in seven years, one would suppose, without previous information, to be the work of an active life. A list of them will justify this observation. He has erected a very elegant palace, ninety feet by sixty, and forty high, in which an unadorned simplicity reigns throughout." (This he describes at length and the noble view it commands.) "The barracks were erected under his Grace's direc-

tions, and form a large and handsome edifice. The school is a building of considerable extent, and admirably adapted for the purpose, a more convenient one or better contrived is nowhere to be seen. There are apartments for the master, a school-room fifty-six feet by twenty-eight, a large dining-room, and spacious airy dormitories, with all other necessities, and a playground walled in; the whole forming a handsome front: and attention having been paid to the residence of the master (the salary is £400 a year), the school flourishes, and must prove one of the greatest advantages to the country of anything that could have been established. This edifice is entirely at the primate's expense. The church is erected of white stone, and having a tall spire makes a very agreeable object in a country where churches and spires do not abound; at least such as are worth looking at. Three other churches the primate has also built, and done considerable reparations to the cathedral. He has been the means also of erecting a public infirmary, which was built by subscription, contributing amply to it himself. A public library he has erected at his own expense, given a large collection of books, and endowed it. The room is excellently adapted, forty-five feet by twenty-five, and a gallery and apartments for the librarian. He has further ornamented the city with a market-house and shambles, and been the direct means (by giving leases upon that condition) of almost new building the whole place. He found it a nest of mud cabins, and will leave it a well-built city of slate and stone. When it is considered that all this has been done in the short space of seven or eight years, I should

not be accused of exaggeration if I said they were noble and spirited works, even undertaken upon a man's paternal estate; but how much more then are they worthy of praise, when executed, not for his own posterity, but for the public good." He mentions that his Grace was engaged likewise in furthering agricultural improvements; into which subjects I shall not accompany him<sup>1</sup>.

I leave it to the imagination to pourtray the activity and plenty which revenues thus dispensed must diffuse through a country, independently of the permanent advantages and embellishments they bestow. As to those who hold property thus possessed, to be, nationally speaking, a nuisance, or that it would be far better in the hands of some heartless absentee, let them enjoy their own opinions unmolested; they are, I understand, enough to keep each other in countenance, nay, it is said their opinions are spreading—that they are the notions of great and influential men, as well as of learned lecturers and grave professors; so that one is almost afraid, as Shakspeare has it, that "this great lubber, the world, will prove a cockney." This lunacy, however, cannot long continue.

(6.) In defending the revenues of the church of Ireland, and the right of its clergy to the value of the tithes, not only on principles of justice, but circumstanced as property now is in that country, as a national good, I would by no means assert that the continuation of the system of tithing is otherwise than bad and barbarous. I shall not touch upon the subject agriculturally; its evils, in disturbing the

<sup>1</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland*, pp. 103, 104.



proper rotation of crops, and, when gathered in kind, in defrauding the land of its regular manure, and above all, in falling as a tax upon superior cultivation, are sufficiently apparent; but these form no reasons for the forfeiture, but for an equitable commutation of tithes. Let those who speak upon this subject, with other views, recollect that the system of collecting tithes in kind is but the continuation of the *metairie* system which once prevailed universally, and still remains in some parts of France, and generally in Italy. The landlords in such case had usually the half, the clergyman a tenth of the produce. It has been found far more convenient to both landlord and tenant to change this mode into the payment of a rent mutually agreed upon between the parties; but the share of the church has continued to be estimated or taken upon the old principle, equally to the disadvantage and dissatisfaction of all concerned: it is, in fact, a relic of barbarism; of a mode which was, perhaps, once necessary, on all hands, when coin was rare, and bargains consequently still continued to be made pretty much on the principle of barter. Even the revenues of the country, at least some of the most productive ones, continued, till within these few centuries past, to be paid in kind, particularly in wools. It is much to be regretted that, as money payments became practicable, and were adopted in almost all other cases; so beneficial an alteration did not take place touching the revenues of the church: one which would have been demonstrably for the benefit of all parties, and more especially for the clergyman, who, I am per-

suaded, notwithstanding the outcry against him, is the greatest sufferer. Nothing, it appears to me, could be easier than a measure which would have the effect of ultimately exonerating all the land in the empire of tithes, and converting them into glebe, without any compulsory clauses whatsoever; though I see not why such might not be resorted to, in order to carry into effect a regulation founded on impartial justice and reciprocal advantage. The ancient and beneficial feelings of reverence and affection between the pastor and his people would then be naturally renewed. On the present system, however, it is almost impossible that the former should escape censure, whatever be his conduct. If he accept less than his right, which he does in most instances, still he does not escape, in many cases, the odium of being an exactor and oppressor, in that he takes anything. Instead of the respect and veneration with which a kind and benevolent landlord is ever regarded, and which he would then be enabled to become, he is now looked upon, at best, but as a sort of ecclesiastical tax-gatherer: nay, I see in the statistical account of Rathvilly, tithe is classed under the head of "local taxation," instead of under the column of rent; a distinction apparently not without a difference, and possibly one of the utmost practical importance. If he do not take his tithes in kind, in the fear that he may and the knowledge that he can, he becomes a standing object of dread and distrust. If he do, he is hated and defied. His ministerial functions are, in the mean time, disliked and deserted, and his office, as well as his person, held

in abhorrence; and from this state of things, many are constantly alienated from the establishment by the very means which, under a better system, would unite them to it, and promote its interest and utility. No temporary commutations, as at present, can fully obviate these evils, much less secure the advantages proposed. That a general bill should not have passed centuries ago, to facilitate the permanent commutation of tithes, is one of those many instances that might be adduced which would almost tempt one to believe that the management of the affairs of the church had been committed into the hands of its enemies. I can hardly see who could have been its opposers, or what were the difficulties, beyond such as always attend the adjustment of separate interests of considerable magnitude. Some such bill might and ought still to be framed; for it cannot be disguised that, owing to the system of management of estates in Ireland, especially as so much is under the "care" of middlemen, the present mode of collecting tithes falls as a very great grievance on the little Irish cultivator; and violent heats, much bloodshed, and great distress, are constantly occasioned by it. Meantime, as an accelerator of such an adjustment, THE LANDLORD SHOULD IN ALL CASES PAY THE VALUE OF THE TITHES TO THE INCUMBENT; which tithes might be annually fixed at a reasonable rate, calculated upon existing prices, but without reference to the variation in the produce of the actual crop; and means might easily be adopted to secure both parties from any material imposition.

(7.) Having ventured to touch upon the ecclesi-

astical property of Ireland, I will just add, that a very beneficial arrangement, of a nature purely prospective, and consequently not interfering with existing rights, might be made so as most essentially to serve the interests of the establishment and its members. If the leasehold system, now absorbing so much of its income, were gradually got rid of, reserving at least what would be as ample a revenue for the purposes to which the whole is appropriated, as now enjoyed; and the surplus thus created were devoted to increasing the number of cures throughout the country, now so lamentably few, the advantages would be great. Who could be the objectors to such a proposition, it is difficult to imagine; certainly not the friends of the establishment. But I am wandering from the matters to which, in the outset, I purposed to confine myself, and to which I shall now return.

§ XI. (1.) The preceding observations, whether in relation to the wrongs of Ireland, or, as I believe them to be, the fatal errors in the propositions of those who, there can be no doubt, are anxious to remedy them, might have been greatly multiplied; they have, however, been already extended to a far greater length than originally intended; as it was less my object to write a treatise on the state and condition of Ireland, than to point out those circumstances which have caused it to become an apparent contradiction to the principle of population, as already propounded. Having, however, insisted upon what I conceive to be the real source of the evils of that country, and exposed, as well as I have been able, the inefficacy, and

indeed the perniciousness, of those remedies which are now so urgently proposed for their removal or relief,—it perhaps may be expected that I should give my ideas as to the methods proper to be adopted, in relation to that country; exposing, in turn, my views on this important matter to that examination to which I have so freely subjected those of others.

It is an ancient, and, hitherto, not an exploded adage, that the knowledge of the disease is, in many cases, half the cure; and if the view which I, or rather others infinitely better qualified to determine, have taken of the prime injury which Ireland sustains, be correct, then the remedy is at once suggested. If Ireland is impoverished, degraded, and distressed, by absenteeism, the cure for these sufferings is doubtless the removal of their cause, or, if that cannot be entirely accomplished, by counteracting its effects as much as possible.

(2.) There are some, however, so extremely tender upon this point, that they would consign a whole country to perpetual suffering, rather than take any measure whatsoever that should have the appearance of touching, ever so slightly, what they denominate the rights of private property. I shall not pause to argue with such; their principles are utterly inconsistent with the paramount rights and even duties of the legislature, and with the ultimate preservation of that property itself, about which they profess to be so anxious. This is a very common idea with those who, nevertheless, are not very adverse to sweeping away the rights of one or two entire classes of society at once, that is, if they think it to be for their interest. Such

I can assure that I feel as averse as any one ought to do, from any measures which the most rigid principles of justice would discountenance, and I would propose nothing that should be reasonably objected to, even by the parties themselves interested. At all events, the propositions I am about to submit are of a far less onerous nature than many laws which have, from time to time, been passed on this subject, and greatly short of what government has, and at no very distant period, proposed, or that which the parties themselves ought voluntarily to adopt.

(3.) As to interfering at all, it has been already hinted, that the property possessed by these absentees, if duly traced, will be found to have been conferred on the condition of personal residence, or what is equivalent to it. The more this matter is examined, the clearer will it appear. This was doubtless the view taken of it by sundry monarchs, and by many parliaments. As early as the reign of Edward III., in 1368, we find him stating, in an ordinance regarding Ireland, that “*pluseurs seigneuries et terres illoeques par noz ditz progeintours feurent donez & grantez a divers seigneurs et auters persones noz-foialt d’engleterre, qi tieur guerdons avoient par leur continuel demoeure sur leur ditz seigneuries purreit sauvement estre defenduz a touz jours : et coment de long temps ont pris les issues et profitz sans defens ou garde covenable y mettre, si qi par leur defaults et non chaler sont les ditz mals avenuz en perdition de la dite terre,*” &c.<sup>1</sup> In the reign of Richard II. a law was passed, fining absentees two-

<sup>1</sup> Anthologia Hibernica ; quoted by Croker, pp. 267, 268, note.



thirds of their estates : a law which was again revived in that of Henry VIII.<sup>1</sup>; as, like all others of this nature, the former had been evaded. In the time of James I., the entire lands of all absentees were vested in the crown<sup>2</sup>. In 1715, the Irish parliament taxed the pensions, salaries, &c. of all absentees four shillings in the pound, which tax was afterwards repealed, not because the principle was disapproved of, but because the dispensing power with which the crown was invested had rendered it a nugatory measure. In 1773, even the government there was so impressed with the evils it occasioned, that a tax of two shillings in the pound was proposed on the real estates of all absentees : the measure, however, was lost by a small majority. Enough, I think, has been advanced to show, that to legislate on this matter would be no innovation.

§ XII. (1.) The first proposition I venture to make is the following :—

I would have the legislature pass a law, by which the great English owners of Irish estates should be empowered to cut off the entail of their Irish property, in favour of the junior branches of their family, on condition that those on whose behalf it should be done should be residents in the country, otherwise their interest, thus created, to revert back to the heir at law. For example, I would enable an Earl Fitzwilliam to will his Irish property, under such limita-

<sup>1</sup> Leland, *Hist. of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 468.

tion, to one or more of his younger sons, any legal obstacle to the contrary notwithstanding.

(2.) When I first conceived this idea, as an easy and natural remedy for that form of absenteeism which is the least, if at all, criminal, namely, where the individual has property in both islands, concerning the mode of dealing with which case there has always been considerable difficulties expressed; I imagined it to have been an original thought, and one which would be hailed even by such absentees themselves, as affectionate fathers, and not very liable to objection on the part of generous brothers. But I am happy to resign all claim to originality for the superior gratification of being enabled to clothe the proposition with the weight due to ancient and far better authority. I find that Dobbs, a true Irish patriot, mentioned so highly by Archbishop Boulter, and now so often referred to, proposed the same thing, under the name of what he calls an act of Gravel-kind, and with precisely the same object.

(3.) I can anticipate but one material objection to this proposition, and that will, after due examination, be surrendered, as founded in ignorance and error. It might be argued, were the theory of population I am opposing true (indeed it is so asserted), that these noble estates, thus divided, would ultimately be parcelled out into insignificant shares, and the rank of the family at length lost by such an expedient. To this it might be answered, that the law of entail might be resumed, regarding estates when so divided, as strictly as had been the case before. But, independently of

this, the objection is entirely imaginary and fallacious. In allusion to the peerage, I have already remarked that the tendency, in great families in possession of large properties, is not to undue multiplication, but to extinction, and that to a very extraordinary degree. A striking proof of the practical errors into which the modern notion upon population betrays its adherents, has recently occurred in the arguments in the French chambers against their law of descent (something like our Kentish law of gavelkind), founded on the geometric theory of human increase; whereas, had the speakers adverted to the statistics of their country, they would have found that the births of France are fewer now than they were half a century ago, and that the increase of the inhabitants is therefore solely attributable to the increased longevity of the country; consequently, as far as the principle of population had to do with the matter, property there must have a tendency to accumulation, instead of division. At all events, as it respects the rank alluded to—the absentee owners of Irish possessions, nothing can be clearer than its constant tendency to diminish. One fact only will sufficiently confirm the interesting principle already alluded to on this point, and it is this:—since the Union, in so short a period as twenty-six years, thirty-two of the Irish peerages, existing at that time, have become extinct.

(4.) In following up this idea, three important parties would be essential gainers. First, the Irish nation, in behalf of whom the proposition is made, amongst whom the income of such (which naturally

belongs to them) would be expended. Second, the empire; which would not then have to sustain so many younger branches of noble and wealthy families, as is now the case. Third, the individuals to whom such property would descend;—while the very persons at whose apparent expense this beneficial arrangement would be effected, still in possession of all that rank and affluence could possibly bestow, would be sufferers in imagination only; nor even in imagination: for we may well believe that the generous elder branches of these great families would participate in the satisfaction and pleasure with which such a regulation would be regarded by every parent worthy of the name.

§ XIII. (1.) My next and far more important proposition in favour of Ireland, is, that a reformed system of poor-laws should be instantly established, founded upon the humane principle, but avoiding the errors, of those of England, in being more completely adapted to the altered circumstances of the times;—that there, as here, wealth should be compelled to assist destitute poverty, in proportion to its means; but that, dissimilar to our practice, that assistance should, in all cases, excepting in those of actual incapability from age or disease, be connected with labour<sup>1</sup>.

But, in making this proposition, it seems necessary that I should enter into a short defence of the principle, especially as it is so much assailed by our poli-

<sup>1</sup> This was not only the original law, but the early practice.—(See Dalton's Country Justice, chap. xx.)

tical economists, who unanimously and vehemently resist its introduction into Ireland, and who, however differing upon other points, unite in their endeavours to vilify the national charity preparatory to its destruction even here. Mr. Malthus speaks authoritatively upon the occasion, in that, as he somewhere says, he has reflected much upon the subject: on that ground I may likewise claim to be heard, as I have not only thought upon it through life, but have voluntarily engaged in the duties the system imposes, as well as in those of other institutions in connexion with it; and have come to a diametrically opposite conclusion: not maintaining that it has not been abused, is not abused, and will not in future be abused (for against what institution, however divine, might not the same charge be urged?—could Christianity itself stand the test of such an unfair ordeal?) but contending that, in its principle, it is founded in justice and mercy, and that, in its operation, it is a universal benefit to the community.

(2.) In proceeding, therefore, to a short defence of the system of a legal provision for the poor, I shall not occupy the entire limits to which I mean to restrict myself, in refuting the obviously frivolous and false objections which are so often urged against it, and which serve to prove that it is unassailable excepting by odious misrepresentations. Always forgetting, or otherwise culpably misrepresenting the description of poverty and distress, to the relief of which so great a proportion of the sums raised is appropriated; many choose to regard the national charity as solely occupied in supporting and maintaining able-bodied

and flagitious idleness<sup>1</sup>. Any authentic list of the relieved will sufficiently answer all such persons<sup>2</sup>; meantime the character of the working classes of the people of England (a race with which the world has none of a similar rank to compare, notwithstanding the perpetual accusations against them) brands the accusation with falsehood; while the institution itself, both in its letter and spirit, contradicts it. Providing for those numerous cases which, in every possible state of human society, must ever remain objects of charitable attention,—it is true it did not leave out of its consideration that species of distress which the very history of the question shows has always existed, and which, to the confusion of the system I am opposing, has ever been found the most general when population has been the fewest, I mean the suffering occasioned by want of employment. Mr. Malthus asserts that such have no rightful claim to the “smallest portion of food:” the institution in question maintains the contrary; but in doing so, it prescribes that, in such cases, labour shall be connected with relief. This, whoever may declare it to be impracticable, is plainly otherwise, and has been so proved by whole communities and countries, for successive ages. Instead, therefore, of this institution being the cause of idleness, it is its cure, and is a simple and efficacious one, whenever properly administered. On the contrary, it is the system that is invariably acted upon, wherever this is found wanting, which is the

<sup>1</sup> “Plundering the industrious to support the idle.”—(Minutes of Evidence before the Lords, on the disturbances of Ireland, p.315.)

<sup>2</sup> See Sir Frederic Morton Eden’s *Hist. of the Poor*, vols. ii. and iii. *passim*.



patron of idleness and mendicancy, as will be observed hereafter. Conceding, most fully, that relief to able-bodied paupers, unconnected with labour, is pernicious in the extreme, I deny as strongly that such is the principle of the system I am about to defend, or its necessary consequence in any instance. Labour is the physic of pauperism of this kind, which would carry off its humours, and reduce it to a sound state, and proportionably diminish the expense of its maintenance. As to the difficulty, or, as some allege, the impossibility of employing the idle poor, the case, I repeat, is palpably otherwise. Even labour, wholly useless with regard to any intrinsic advantage to the public, would be invaluable in this view of the subject, and surely such might every where be created<sup>1</sup>. But there is no need to fix upon any degrading and utterly useless employments. Human labour is, unquestionably, too sacred an instrument to be thus disgraced; far too valuable a talent thus to be squandered. It might and ought to be directed to objects of general interest and utility, which present themselves wherever we may be; such as, probably, individual enterprise will never attempt, but which, for that very reason, it may be the more necessary that the public should accomplish. What

<sup>1</sup> The following quotation from Sir William Petty is not only in illustration of this point, but likewise incidentally shows that the want of labour is not peculiar to a crowded population, as some suppose, but rather to the contrary: "It is no matter if their labour," speaking of the idle poor, "be employed to build a useless pyramid upon Salisbury plain,—bring the stones at Stonehenge to Tower Hill, or the like; for at worst this would inure their minds to discipline and obedience, and their bodies to a patient and profitable labour when need shall require it."—(Polit. Anatomy, p. 16.)

would have been achieved, if the sums, often worse than wasted in keeping the poor in idleness, instead of employing them, had been thus directed? What might still be the consequences, if a better administration of the national charity were to prevail? A writer of celebrity in the last century lamented this malversation of its funds, in a country where, he observed, the labour of five hundred thousand individuals, for five hundred years, might be most advantageously devoted to enterprises of universal interest and utility. Minor objects, however, solicit our attention in every direction; but, without suggesting such at present, or the means by which they might be accomplished, I will content myself with stating that the advocates of the poor-laws are as anxious as their impugnors can be, that in all cases where relief is administered on the ground of want of work, it should, agreeably to the ancient institution, be coupled with labour, under these obviously necessary regulations:—First, the employment ought to be such as not to interfere with the regular “market of labour;” and, secondly, its remuneration should be somewhat lower than for that usually demanded; and, moreover, it should be, generally speaking, of a less desirable kind. Such a regulation would instantly reform pauperism, and obviate the objection to the entire system now so perpetually urged, and at the same time would prevent the remedy from itself ever becoming an evil, as is too commonly the case.

Under these regulations, then, nothing seems to be clearer than the policy of this institution, in

every point of view, and especially in a great manufacturing country, where machinery is daily multiplying, and employment in perpetual fluctuation. It equalizes the price and sustains the value of labour; and supports, in such sudden transitions, those masses of society which create, and consequently are essential to, national wealth: just as the cultivator in the inactive season, for—*hiems ignava colono*—carefully preserves his team for future use. Then, as to those who, even in a time of general activity, cannot sustain themselves, for such there have ever been, and will still continue to be, while human society endures, whatever be its form,—such as the infant orphan; the destitute widow; the impotent, whether of mind or body; or those who, in the midst of their labours, are maimed by accidents, or arrested by sickness—stricken, as our ancestors expressed themselves, by the act of GOD!—is anything more reasonable than that wealth should support these in proportion to its superfluity? Is anything more necessary than such a law?

(3.) But it is said that the poor ought to save sufficient to maintain themselves, during all these fluctuations and sufferings, and in anticipation of them. Nothing, however, can equal the absurdity of such a proposition, notwithstanding the gravity with which it is propounded, and the constancy with which it is repeated. It is absurd, because, first, of its utter impossibility in most cases. How, for instance, is the desolate orphan to provide itself with this previous fund? How is the man just entered on his labours, smitten with a lingering disease, or deprived of his

limbs by the numerous accidents to which that labour exposes him, to amass it? But I go further; I totally deny the possibility, in most cases, even of those whose health and labour has been the least interrupted, to do so: let those who have the face to propose it, turn to the condition of the agricultural labourer, and, very frequently, to that of the manufacturing one, and answer the question. As those misfortunes and calamities are incident to them all, but are not to be foreseen by any, each must provide against the contingency personally and individually. Let the actuary then put himself to work, and calculate the fund that poverty must accumulate in order to free itself from the necessity of assistance on these emergencies, and arithmetic, I think, will dispose of this class of objectors to the poor laws. The cash of the empire, were it all transmitted into the pockets of the poor, would not suffice for this scheme of doing away with the necessity of the poor laws. At first sight it is plain enough that it would demand a capital of upwards of one hundred and forty millions, placed out in the savings banks, to meet the annual demand paid to the whole of the poor. But this is a very superficial and inadequate view of the case; it supposes that the five or six millions now expended upon them should be equally distributed amongst, and borne by the whole number of the poor, as is now done amongst the wealthy; whereas, as individuals would then have to sustain themselves without assistance in any unforeseen sufferings that might befall them, it follows that every individual must save up, not only his share of the average expense which is now incurred in behalf of his class, but that he should

provide against those more distressing and permanent afflictions to which all are liable, at least, if he is to avoid that which he is to regard as a disgrace—assistance. At present the average annual expenditure on a pauper may amount to about six pounds : it is obvious, in the first place, that the labouring class must each of them provide a fund to meet this ; but this is not all : in the alphabet of pauperism, though on the average of the letters the sum mentioned may be that expended on each, yet it is certain that two or three of them may, and do receive many times as much as that average ; all of them must therefore provide against these more pressing cases, none knowing where the lot will fall. On this view of the subject (and its justness cannot be disputed), the savings of the poor ought to amount to at least a second national debt. The proposition is preposterous. It may be said, indeed, that throwing the poor on their own resources would greatly diminish this expense ; so it might on the plan of beggary and starvation. There is no difficulty on that head, with some : but, consistently with the dictates of justice and mercy, we deny that the expense ought to be materially reduced ; on the contrary, most writers of real experience and humanity, from Sir W. Petty downwards, have maintained that it is an item in the national disbursements that stands in need, rather, of being increased. Let any one cast his eyes over Sir Frederick Morton Eden's work on the poor, and see, in the parochial returns, in many of which the objects receiving relief are described, and their ages specified, and determine how many he could erase ! I am tempted

to give a list or two of these, but I shall content myself with referring to the entire work<sup>1</sup>.

But perhaps it may be replied, they might be in a club or friendly society, so as to obviate this objection; and this to as wide an extent as possible, is highly desirable, were those institutions placed under different regulations to what they usually are at present; but even then, they never could become so comprehensive and universal as to supersede the necessity for poor laws. But we may retort, on those who urge the foregoing proposition, the question—what do the poor laws form but a great national club, or, as our Saxon ancestors would have denominated it, a guild, to which all that are qualified contribute, in behalf of the distressed members? I early learnt this doctrine from a pauper who had in his better days kept his equipage, but who had lost his fortune by a generous act, which elevated his character as much as it depressed his condition: he disdained alms; but he gratefully took the parochial pittance: “I have,” said he, “paid largely to this national fund in my better days; and in my turn I need its benefit and am not ashamed to receive it.”

But further: supposing the poor, I mean the labouring classes throughout the kingdom, were put upon this plan of universal saving; if there be the least truth in true political economy (not the unintelligible, paradoxical, prophetic jargon now so denominated, but that founded upon the just principles, sober sense,

<sup>1</sup> See, in corroboration of this view of the subject, an able pamphlet, by Mr. Rogers, of Sheffield; who speaks as to the impracticability of materially reducing the expense of sustaining the poor, from personal experience.



and sound experience of mankind,) were they for that purpose to diminish the expenses of their present mode of living, and instead of “wheat-bread eaters” become “potatoe eaters,” to take up the profound observation of our emigration report,—is it not evident that the remuneration of their labour would be diminished in precisely the same ratio? I understand it to be a universally acknowledged axiom, that the wages of labour have a constant tendency to accommodate themselves to the actual average expenses of those rendering it. If there be the least truth in this, the proposal to the working classes, that they should diminish their daily expenditure, in order to save money, would only have the effect, if attended to universally, of diminishing the remuneration of their labour precisely in the same proportion as they had diminished their comforts. The fact is, that nothing but the spur of necessity occasions the bulk of mankind to labour at all, and they only labour up to their necessity<sup>1</sup>. Poverty is the great weight which keeps the social machine going: remove that, and the gilded hands would not long be seen to move aloft, nor the melodious chimes be heard again. Nothing on earth can be less philosophical than the idea of making the whole of the labouring classes hoarders of money; meritorious instances of this kind occur, it is true, but it should be recollected that they can exist only as exceptions: but to render these general, were it possible, would obviously defeat the intended purpose, and derange the whole social system.

(4.) But allowing all these impossibilities to be sur-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Franklin, *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 166.

mounted, that, as the poor reduced their habits of living, their wages should still remain as they are, and that they should individually be enabled to save, so as to provide against the misfortunes to which all are liable, what would be the effect of this universal parsimony? This is no difficult question to answer, by those who recollect that, with the exception of, comparatively speaking, a small class, the producers and the consumers are reciprocally identified. To realize the scheme of superseding the poor laws, and in a great measure private charity, by this system of universal saving, the great mass of the community must content themselves with a greatly-diminished consumption, either of agricultural or manufactured produce, or both. Surely no one needs to be reminded of the instant and inevitable consequences of their doing either. Let them be reduced, as it respects their living, to Irish, or, if we may credit Sir John Sinclair, to Scotch fare<sup>1</sup>; and what need is there for the produce of the pasturage of England or Ireland, nine-tenths of which, at least, are consumed by those who, if put upon this saving plan, must universally, or, not to speak in extremes, generally abstain? Then as it respects the manufactures of the country, to which, after all, the commonalty of the realm are the main support; if the demand for clothes, furniture, and every other convenience of life now enjoyed by them, and all the product of human

<sup>1</sup> "In Scotland the greater proportion of the labouring classes of the community hardly ever taste animal food, but live upon porridge, bread, beer, and water-kail, as it is called."—(Sinclair's Code of Health and Longevity, p. 539.)

labour, should be greatly diminished, and consequently so much fewer be manufactured, the result must be again equally fatal. A calculation in evidence of this might easily be made, but it is unnecessary. Take the numbers of the class in question as low as you can, and make the diminution in their daily expenditure as little as is consistent with the proposal, and it will be instantly seen that, if this disinterested recommendation of modern philanthropy could be carried into effect, a single year would throw millions out of employment, and consequently out of bread; and ruin, beyond all hope of recovery, the finances of the country. You would have got rid of the poor laws, it is true; but you would at the same time have desolated your pastures, closed your manufactories, emptied your exchequer, and spread universal idleness and beggary; in a word, after you had robbed the poor, you would become national bankrupts, with the consolation of having richly deserved your fate.

(5.) But we have not yet quite done with this proposition, that the poor should be compelled so to lay up against a time of sickness or distress, or loss of employment, or, lastly, old age, as not to burden the public; or that they should otherwise be left to their fate under such circumstances. Another remark will serve to show the nature of this proposal, and, I hope, hold it up to the contempt and abhorrence it deserves. Do those who make it to the poor, address it to the other and higher orders of society, where its adoption would be far more reasonable, practicable, and just? Have any of the political economists, who have uttered such vehement things against poverty in this particu-

lar, held forth that the ministers, the chancellors, the judges, and all other servants of the crown;—that all public officers, civil, military, or naval;—that all bishops and ministers of the church, of all orders and degrees; I say, have they proposed, when the health of these fails, or they have advanced far in years, so as to be no longer fully capable of performing the duties of their several callings, that they should at once resign them, and give up their emoluments without any equivalent, half-pay, pension, superannuated allowance, or consideration whatsoever? Yet most of these have private fortunes, many of them ample ones; while the bounty of the country, in the mean time, enables them to put the saving plan into execution, without, in many instances, sacrificing an iota of their personal comforts. But, no: it is held quite proper that many of these should be continued in the enjoyment of their entire incomes till death, and that, under one denomination or another, nearly all the rest should have retiring allowances, amounting, on the whole, few as their numbers comparatively are, to millions. *Da prætori; da deinde tribuno*<sup>1</sup>, as of old; but that the wretched should receive anything,—that the poor worn-out hind, who has had the misfortune to survive his strength, should have a morsel of the produce of those fields which he has tilled for half a century,—or that the cripple who has been maimed in some of the boasted manufactories of the country, should be allowed a few daily pence at the public cost;—this is the grievance, according to our political economists! We are persuaded to use such

<sup>1</sup> See Juvenal, sat. i.

far worse than a heathen poet recommends that his countrymen should treat a worn-out beast of burden:

“ Hunc quoquè, ubi aut morbo gravis, aut jam segnior annis,  
Deficit, abde domo, nec turpi ignosce senectæ.”

I would here guard myself against misrepresentation; I would not have the public servants of the country deserted by a just and grateful people, and on this very ground I protest against the most essential, though the humblest of these, the poor worn-out labourer, being

“ Deserted in his utmost need  
By those his former labours fed!”

And nothing in this day is more astonishing than the constantly repeated exhortations that we should do so, even considered with a view, simply, to their unfairness.

Cunning, Lord Bacon somewhere says, is left-handed wisdom; selfishness is, I think, generally found to be folly; it is always founded on injustice. Let us, then, consult a different guide; the subject is very ancient, and one of universal interest, and we are not likely to understand it the worse, if we take the lights of reason, religion, and experience in examining it.

(6.) In defending a legal provision for the destitute poor, which I take to be the principle of the poor laws of England, I argue, first, that it is agreeable to the strictest justice, or, in other words,—

First, The poor have a RIGHT to relief founded in the nature of things. To prove this would, an age ago, have been deemed quite superfluous; the new school has, however, ventured to contradict this right, and in no very hesitating terms. Mr. Malthus, with

whom I have chiefly to do, asserted long ago, that such have “no claim of right to the smallest portion of food;” and further, that “they have no business to be where they are<sup>1</sup>,” and, that he is consistent in his opinion, his late evidence fully shows. I shall argue the point with him in other words than my own, as the powerful reasons adduced will then have the weight of authorities which, on such a matter, it will require some little effrontery to contemn.

Passing over heathen writers (many of whom have been very explicit upon this point) with this simple observation, that it seems strange that, in an argument in favour of the rights of humanity, a successful appeal might be made from the Christianity of the modern school to the Heathenism of the ancient one; I shall adduce the authority of those who have written expressly on this point, since the establishment of the present state of things,—confining myself to a very few, but those of an order to whom numbers could add no additional weight.

Grotius, speaking of this right, thus expresses himself: “Let us now see whether men may not have a right to enjoy, in common, those things that are already become the properties of other persons; which question will, at first, seem strange, since property seems to have swallowed up that *right*, which one man may lay claim to in common with the rest. But this is a mistake; for we must examine into the designs and intentions of those who first introduced these particular properties, which we may imagine to be such as deviated the least from natural justice. For, if even written laws are always to be explained in that

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay, p. 531.



sense which comes nearest to common equity, much more customs, then, which are unconfined, and not at all chained down to the letter of the law. From whence it follows, that, in a case of absolute necessity, that former *right* of using things, as if they still remained in common, must revive and be in full force<sup>1</sup>." He afterwards states, that "such a right is for the preservation of natural equity, against the rigour and severity of property and dominion;" but adds, that "some precautions are to be regarded, lest this liberty should go too far," and points out the very mode our law prescribes. The same profound author goes on to say, that "this is a received opinion among divines" (he could not now so assert); and remarks, that, in the original of government, there were some exceptions in cases of the like nature. "For," says he, "if they, who were first concerned in that division of things we now see, could be asked their opinions in this matter, they would answer the same as we assert."

Puffendorf, in his *Rights of Nature and of Nations*, takes a somewhat different view of the subject, but expresses himself in still stronger terms, and more at large; I must, however, content myself with merely referring to the sixth chapter of the second book of his work, "*De jure et favore necessitatis*;" where the reader will find the subject amply discussed<sup>2</sup>.

I shall only quote another foreign writer on the subject; Montesquieu. "The state," says he, "owes to every citizen a certain subsistence, a proper nourishment, convenient clothing, and a kind of life not in-

<sup>1</sup> Grotius, *De Jure Bel. ac Pacis*. l. ii. c. ii. § 1, 2.

Puffendorf, *De Jure Nat. et Gent*. l. ii. c. vi. 4to. Scan. 1672.

compatible with health." Whenever it happens, that, amongst the numerous persons engaged in different branches of trade, some suffer, and he observes it is impossible it should be otherwise, he does not pronounce that such have no claim to the smallest portion of food; but, on the contrary, "C'est pour lors que l'état a besoin d'apporter un prompt secours<sup>1</sup>."

Mr. Malthus is very witty on l'Abbé Raynal, for talking of "le droit de subsister," saying, that a man has just as good a right to live a hundred years<sup>2</sup>. His wit will, however, appear rather ridiculous, when transferred to our next authority. Locke says, 'Reason tells us, that all men have a RIGHT to their subsistence; and, consequently, to meat and drink, and such other things as nature affords for their preservation. We "know," says he elsewhere, "that God has not left one man so to the mercy of another, that he may starve him if he please. God, the Lord and Father of all, has given no one of his children such a property in his peculiar portion of the things of this world, but that he has given his needy brother a RIGHT to the surplusage of his goods, so that it cannot *justly* be denied him when his pressing wants call for it<sup>3</sup>.'" Mr. Malthus, it is well known, has put a case or two, and hideous ones they are, and hideously determined<sup>4</sup>; so does this great writer, but he disposes of them very differently. "What," says he, "is to be done in this case? I answer: the fundamental law of nature being, that all, as much as may be, should be

<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu, De l'Esprit des Loix, l. xxiii. ch. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Malthus, Essay on Population, p. 532.

<sup>3</sup> Locke on Gov., book i. ch. iv. § 42. <sup>4</sup> Malthus, p. 540, &c.

preserved, it follows, that if there be not enough fully to satisfy both,—he that hath, and to spare, must remit something of his full satisfaction, and give way to the pressing and *preferable right* of those who are in danger to perish without it<sup>1</sup>.”

Blackstone, stating, under the head of rights of persons, the law authorizing the wretched and indigent to demand from the more opulent part of the community the necessities of life, declares it to be “a provision, dictated by the principles of society<sup>2</sup>.”

Paley asserts the natural right of the poor to subsistence in the most explicit and forcible terms. I shall only quote a few words from him; in which it will be seen how directly he contradicts our more modern jurist, who says the poor have “no claim as of right to the smallest portion of food:” he, on the contrary, asserts that “the poor have a *claim* founded on the law of nature,” and argues upon it at large, concluding thus:—“When, therefore, the partition of property is rigidly maintained against the claims of impotence or distress, it is maintained in opposition to the intention of those who made it, and to **HIS** who is the supreme proprietor of every thing, and who has filled the world with plenteousness, for the sustentation and comfort of **ALL** he sends into it<sup>3</sup>.”

(7.) Secondly: the poor have a sacred claim to relief, founded on divine revelation.

In the institutions of the Jewish legislator, which, as Montesquieu somewhere observes, were to the

<sup>1</sup> Locke, Treatise on Government, book ii. p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> Blackstone, Commentaries, book i. ch. i. p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Paley, Moral and Polit. Philosophy, book iii. chap. v. p. 154.

Israelites positive laws, though we read them only as precepts, the legal provision for the poor holds a most conspicuous place, and has, probably, been the foundation of all similar institutions throughout Christendom. The tithe of every third year, stored for the purpose<sup>1</sup>; the remnant of the crops of every year (fixed at one-sixtieth part<sup>2</sup>); the share of the entire produce of every seventh year, independently of sundry other benevolent ordinances, of much importance, made in their behalf,—formed a provision for the poor of Israel which has as yet never been equalled in any country of the world. On the lowest possible computation, were that institution transferred to England, it would treble the amount now raised amongst us. And this ample provision was carried into effect and penally enforced<sup>3</sup>. Besides all this, it ought to be remembered that the fundamental institutions of the Theocracy, such as the minute division of property, and its restoration to the original owners, or their descendants, every fiftieth year, preserved, perhaps, a vaster mass of the population in equal and easy circumstances than was ever the case with any other people. The learned Selden has written on the provision for the poor of Israel, and to him I must refer for further information on this interesting subject. I shall not, however, omit confronting by this divine institution a modern objection to our own poor laws, and certainly the most absurd, notwithstanding its prevalence, of any that has hitherto been advanced. It is now

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xv. 28. Tobit, i. 8. Josephus, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> Selden, *De Jure Nat. et Gent.*, ch. vi. p. 692.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Synedr., lib. ii. ch. 13. n. 8.

said that a public provision for the poor is totally subversive of the very principle and nature of charity. Such might as well affirm that the voluntary fulfilment of those other duties of social or public life, which happen to be recognised and enjoined by law (and they are many), likewise loses all its value. But to the point. Is not voluntary charity connected with this public provision for the poor, in these sacred records? Let those who doubt it, turn to the laws and exhortations of Moses and the prophets, and they will soon be satisfied on this head. Notwithstanding the legal relief prescribed, still the duty of personal charity, the liberality with which it should be dispensed, and the generous feelings with which its exercise was to be accompanied, are solemnly dictated: "Thou shalt surely give him; and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land. Therefore, I command thee saying; Thou shalt open thine hand wide, to thy brother, to thy poor, and thy needy in the land," (Deut. xv. 10, 11).

I cannot refrain from going further into the subject, as it respects the institutions of Moses. We have seen that the right of the poor and their business to be where they were are there fully recognised: even the term itself is sanctioned in holy writ. And only suppose that the Deity has the same merciful consideration for an Irishman as for an Israelite, and then some of the passages may, perhaps, be found striking. God is represented there as the bestower of this right.

“ Behold, GOD is mighty, and despiseth not any ; he is mighty in strength and wisdom : he giveth RIGHT<sup>1</sup> to the poor,” (Job, xxxvi. 5, 6.) As the upholder of it ; “ The Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the RIGHT of the poor,” (Ps. cxl. 12.) As its awful vindicator : “ Woe unto them that take away the RIGHT of the poor :” (Isa. x. 2.) The foundation of this right is furthermore revealed to us ; and an awful and unalienable one it is ! “ The land is MINE, and ye are the the strangers and sojourners with me !” (Lev. xxv. 23.) On the sufficiency of Divine Providence : “ Thou, O GOD, hast prepared of thy bounty for the poor !” (Ps. lxxviii. 10.) On the feelings of human kindred : “ Thy poor brother !” (Deut. xv. 7.) On respect for human misery : “ ‘Thou shalt not vex him ; thou shalt surely give him !’” (Deut. xv.) On the vicissitudes of human life : “ Love ye therefore the strangers, for ye were strangers !” (Deut. x. 19.) On the grateful remembrance of past mercies : “ It shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless and the widow ; and thou shalt remember that thou wert a bondman in the land of Egypt :” (Deut. xxiv. 21, 22.) On the certain prospect of human suffering : “ Blessed be the man that considereth the poor and needy : the Lord will deliver *him* in his time of trouble ; will preserve ; will comfort ; will strengthen *him*, when he lieth sick upon his bed,” (Ps. xli. 1—3.) It is guaranteed by the promises of God : “ For this thing the Lord thy GOD will bless thee :” (Deut. xv. 10.) By

<sup>1</sup> That no false gloss is put upon the term RIGHT, see Schulteus, one of the most learned Hebraists of modern times, on Proverbs, iii. 27, p. 25.



his denunciations: "If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless!" (Exod. xxii. 23, 24.) It is further represented as a right, for the neglect of which the observance of no other duties, however sacred, will atone: "Incense is an abomination to me! Relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow!" (Isa. l. 13, 17.) "Is not this the fast that I have chosen?—to deal thy bread to the hungry! and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house! when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh!" (Isa. lviii. 6, 7.) And lastly, and above all, the Deity has connected this right of the poor with the highest and most distinguished attributes of His nature, and placed His pity for them amongst His brightest perfections and sublimest titles. "Sing unto God, sing praises to his name, extol him that rideth upon the heavens, by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.—A father to the fatherless, a judge of the widows, is God, in his holy habitation," (Ps. lxviii. 4, 5.) Hear Moses's last, sublime description of him: "The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible! He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment! Love ye therefore the strangers!"

Institutions like these, and so guaranteed, had doubtless a wonderful effect on the people on whom they were imposed. We are told, now, that this

care and preservation of the poor would increase population; this, however, was regarded by the divine philosopher and legislator of Israel as a signal mark of the divine complacency, and experience proved it such. Hence he exultingly adds to the passage last quoted; “Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons, and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude!”

And can a question be started whether the Christian religion lessened the claims and rights of the poor, and relaxed the duty of attending to them? or placed them upon a yet broader foundation, and fenced them round by the deepest motives that time or eternity could inspire? It would be an insult upon the spirit and letter of that religion to pursue such an inquiry. Even Bolingbroke saw clearly enough that “general benevolence and universal charity are the distinguishing badges of Christianity.” A regular provision for the poor was amongst the first of the apostolic institutions<sup>1</sup>, was established wherever Christianity was spread<sup>2</sup>, and will never cease till its spirit shall be utterly extinguished.

In closing these observations upon the sacred right of the poor to relief, as further confirmed by divine revelation, I must remark that this title does not rest upon the foundation of individual worthiness, nor, indeed, does personal demerit abrogate it; though such circumstances may, properly enough,

<sup>1</sup> Acts, v. 1 Cor. xvi. 2. 2 Cor. viii. Romans, xv. 26. Gal. ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Cornel. Ep. ad Fab. ap. Euseb. lib. vi. c. 43. Chrys. Hom. 67, in Matth. See Bingham's *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*, vol. ii. p. 286, vol. vii. p. 446.

be taken into due consideration in its ministration. It is placed upon a very different basis—upon human suffering, and the pleasure of GOD that it should be relieved. If there be one point more pre-eminently clear in our religion than another, it is that we are totally inhibited from making merit the sole passport to our mercy; the foundation of the modern code. Every precept touching this divine virtue instructs us to the contrary<sup>1</sup>, and I defy those who hold the opposite notion to produce one in their favour. A feeling that has to be excited by some delicate sentimental touches, some Shandean scene, and is to be under the guardianship of worldly policy, may be the virtue of political economy; but this fancy-charity has nothing in common with that disinterested, devoted, unbounded benevolence, which, as Tertullian says, is the mark and brand of Christianity. Nor must I omit to add that, agreeably to this religion, the feelings of the poor are no more to be insulted in relieving them than are their wants to be neglected. Mr. Malthus may, indeed, say, that “dependent poverty ought to be held disgraceful<sup>2</sup>,” but to save it from that disgrace, GOD has taken poverty under his peculiar protection, and it remains so connected, in every form of religion, throughout the earth<sup>3</sup>. “Jesus Christ” (I quote from Tillotson) “chose to be a beggar, that we, for his sake,

<sup>1</sup> I shall only refer to our Lord’s sermon on the Mount, Matt. v. 43—48, Luke, vi. 33—35, &c., and to his parable of the Prodigal Son, in proof of this. Let those who choose preach another gospel; but it is not Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> Malthus, p. 410.

<sup>3</sup> Our Saxon ancestors called the poor *goder þeapran*, God’s poor. Spelman, Concil. vol. i. p. 523.

might not despise the poor<sup>1</sup>:" or, to use the language of another distinguished prelate, "he seems studiously to have bent his whole endeavours to vindicate the honour of depressed humanity, to support its weakness, to countenance its wants, to ennoble its misery, and to dignify its disgrace<sup>2</sup>."

Perhaps so much allusion to our religion and its sacred records, may appear very strange in a pamphlet of the present day, and demand an excuse; I will therefore give one, in the terms of the reverend expounders of our common law: "Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land". It became more particularly so as our immortal legislator, Alfred, left it; who embodied into his institutions the entire spirit, and much of the letter of those passages to which I have been appealing; and with whom that enlarged and systematic charity for which England has, happily, been long distinguished, first commenced.

(8.) Lastly, then, I remark that the poor have a *legal* right to relief, and one that has been confirmed by innumerable acts of parliament, and enjoyed by them for a succession of ages, and which, when granted, was only a substitute for a far more ancient and ample provision, of which they had been deprived. Mr. Malthus says that they have "no claim as of right;" the constitution of the country says (and here again I express myself in the words of Paley) that "the poor have the same right to that proportion of a man's property that the laws assign them, that the man himself has to the remain-

<sup>1</sup> Arbp. Tillotson, Sermons, p. 566.    <sup>2</sup> Bishop Hurd, Sermons.

der<sup>1</sup>." That much alteration is requisite in the present code of our poor laws, I freely admit ; not with a view to overreach the poor, or to serve ourselves ; but with a view to benefit them. A plan to this effect I have long considered, and shall, I hope, be enabled to submit to the public ; the effect of which would indeed be a considerable diminution in the charge of their sustentation, though I trust the deserving part of them would be greatly benefited, and the rest not deserted. On this, however, I shall not at present enter, further than to say that the departure from the original principle has been the great error, and its restoration and accommodation to the altered condition of the country the necessary remedy : connected with this, a system of assistances seems necessary and desirable, which would likewise become distinctions to the meritorious, and which, without entailing on the country one farthing of expense, would, by appealing to their best feelings, make our great national charity a mighty lever in raising the moral condition of the poor ; instead of being, as it now sometimes is, the means of its depression. But to return :

(9.) If the poor have this right to assistance on the ground of natural justice, policy, and religion, it is no wonder that their systematic relief has been established in so many nations of the world ; for it is a great mistake to suppose that such has been confined to this, and one or two other countries. The former reasons were abundantly sufficient to introduce such a system into the free states of antiquity. In Greece, we know such to have been the case. In

<sup>1</sup> Paley, Moral and Polit. Philosophy, book iii. ch. 5, p. 162.

Athens, for instance<sup>1</sup>, in Rhodes<sup>2</sup>, in Sparta, in Crete<sup>3</sup>, in Phœacia<sup>4</sup>, in short, throughout the states generally<sup>5</sup>. In ancient Rome, the distributions were carried to the most lavish extent. It does not, however, appear that slaves, then forming so numerous a body, were included in these provisions; the honour of stooping to the lowest degradation of poverty and wretchedness was reserved for that religion, in which “Mercy and Truth have met together.” Under this religion, the vast endowments for the poor were, perhaps, carried to even a mischievous length; and none can read of their magnitude, and indiscriminate distributions in Spain<sup>6</sup>, in Italy<sup>7</sup>, Naples<sup>8</sup>, and elsewhere,

<sup>1</sup> “There was a poor law in Athens.” (Mitford, vol. iii. p. 15.) Demosthenes says,—“Instead of depriving the poor of what the state bestows, we ought, if there were not this provision, to find out some other means of supplying their necessities.” See the whole of his fourth Philippic. Two oboli, at least, besides other largesses, were daily distributed to the poor, in Demosthenes’s time, equal to half a bushel of wheat per week. (Leland’s translation, vol. ii. p. 12.) See the beneficial effect of this provision, Isocrates, *Orat. Areop.* 8vo. Cantab. pp. 290, 291.

<sup>2</sup> The Rhodians laid it down as a maxim, that every man should work while he was able for his own maintenance, but should be as well maintained when he was no longer so, at the expense of the state. (Strabon. *Geog. lib. xiv. p. 357.* T. Liv. lib. xlvii.)

<sup>3</sup> In Crete, Aristotle informs us, the poorest citizens were provided for at the expense of the state; in Sparta, however, he says, those partook of a like provision who were capable of bearing a proportion of the expense. (*Re Repub. lib. iii.*; Dr. Gillies’ Translation, b. ii., p. 112.)

<sup>4</sup> Homer, *Odys. lib. vi.*

<sup>5</sup> Demosthenes, Philippic iv. Menander, *Serm. 37.*

<sup>6</sup> Townsend’s *Travels in Spain.*

<sup>7</sup> Eustace, *Classical Tour through Italy.* Baretti, *Account of Manners and Customs of Italy*, vol. ii. p. 100. Arthur Young, *Travels in France.* The charitable foundations in the City of Milan alone amount to 3,000,000 livres (£87,500). Population 126,000, (p. 645.) In Florence there are 37 hospitals and alms’ houses; one of which has 70,000 crowns yearly revenue. (Ray’s *Observations, &c.*, p. 325.)

Eustace, *Classical Tour, &c.*



without fearing that mischiefs have been occasioned of a serious nature by their lavish profusion. In Austria, we hear of great exertions to sustain the poor, especially in Vienna<sup>1</sup>, and other Catholic cities of Germany<sup>2</sup>. In Bavaria, there are laws obliging each community to maintain its own poor<sup>3</sup>. In Protestant Germany they are still better provided for<sup>4</sup>. The admirable plan by which this is accomplished in Hamburgh has long been before the British public<sup>5</sup>. Nor is Russia, whose thin population one might suppose would prevent the establishment of any general plan in their favour, without a regular system in favour of the poor<sup>6</sup>. Of the humanity of Switzerland I need say nothing; in addition to foundations, magnificent in relation to the people's numbers and their means<sup>7</sup>, "every Swiss," as every Englishman, "is a burgher somewhere, and has a right to assistance in his parish<sup>8</sup>." In Norway, though we are told by Mr. Malthus there is no established provision for the poor<sup>9</sup>, we know to the contrary; there is one, adapted

<sup>1</sup> Reisbeck, *Travels through Germany*; quoted in *Collections for the Poor*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> See an *Account of the Method of Maintaining the Poor in Manheim*, Este's *Journey*, p. 337.

<sup>3</sup> Count Rumford, *History of the Public Establishment for the poor in Bavaria*, ch. i.

<sup>4</sup> *Render's Tour in Germany*, p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> *Reports of the Society for bettering the condition of the Poor*, vol. ii. p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> "The aged and infirm are provided with food and raiment, and lodging, at the expense of the owner of the estate."—(Dr. Clarke, *Travels in Russia*.) As to others who may be in want, in many parts of the empire "there is a college of general provision in each government."—(Tooke's *View of the Russian Empire*, vol. ii. p. 181, &c.) The great charitable foundations in the cities need not be pointed out.

<sup>7</sup> Stolberg, *Travels*, &c, vol. ii. pp. 137, 138.

<sup>8</sup> Sismondi, *Switzerland*, vol. i. p. 452. <sup>9</sup> Malthus, *Essay*, p. 547.

to the condition of the country, and the scanty and scattered state of its population. Dr. Clarke says, the paupers he saw there (and there were twelve hundred in the town of Trond, consisting of ten thousand inhabitants only) were provided for, and apparently better than in England<sup>1</sup>. Respecting Sweden, I must direct the reader to the note below, where he will see how safe it is to rely on Mr. Malthus's authority, when he speaks about the poor; they are maintained, and almost precisely in the same manner as in England<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Clarke, *Travels in Scandinavia*, p. 637.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Malthus speaks thus on Sweden, whose condition he professes to have examined so closely, and consequently says so much about in his work:—"In Sweden, from the deaths, which are not unfrequently owing to the general failure of crops in an unpropitious climate, and the impossibility of great importations in a poor country, an attempt to establish a system of parochial relief, such as that in England, if it were not speedily abandoned, from the physical impossibility of executing it, would level the property of the kingdom from one end of it to the other, and convulse the social system in such a manner as absolutely to prevent it from recovering to its former state on the return of plenty," (p. 546.) It has been in the very same strain that he has been recently alarming the fears, and rousing the selfishness of the wealth of Ireland against the introduction of poor laws there. Now, what will the reader say, when he is informed that, notwithstanding this "physical impossibility," there are poor laws in Sweden?—and certainly, considering the means of the people, the principle is carried to a much greater extent even than in England, for, in addition to the relief of the distressed, the education of the poor is secured, in their national institution. But I will give the facts in the language of a gentleman, who, like Mr. M. and his friends, was a literary traveller to the same country, and from the sister university. "The poor cottagers are not neglected by the government in point of education, nor in other respects sparingly supplied. Parochial schools are universally kept up, and there are few among the peasants but what are able to read and write."—This is admirable; but it is to the following passage I particularly direct the reader's attention. "With regard to their maintenance when in distress, *constant parochial aid is afforded*, and a poor-house supported in every parish, at the expense of a light rate upon the property of the wealthier inhabitants. The funds, moreover, arising from the charity boxes for gratuitous donations, are in part destined to the same bene-

Even in poor Iceland, there is an adequate provision for the poor by law. In Flanders, throughout the rural parts, there are permanent funds, as well as eleemosynary foundations, for the sustentation of the poor<sup>1</sup>, which accounts for the absence of beggary<sup>2</sup> compared with France, though the latter has little more than half the population; while in the great cities the provision is, or at least was, immense<sup>3</sup>. Regarding Holland, to which the former country is now united, under the common appellation of the Netherlands, nothing, I presume, need be said in praise of their kind, constant, and unwearied attention to all their poor<sup>4</sup>; it has long been the theme of universal

volent purpose; a distribution of their receipts is made to a certain number of out-pensioners, as well as the inmates of the poor-house, who are generally portioned in four classes: the sick; the aged; those who have large families, and those who are helpless from extreme poverty." (*Journal of a Tour through Sweden, &c. in 1813, and 1814, by F. T. James, Esq., p. 105.*) The charity of Sweden, from its metropolis\* to its humblest village†, has long been noticed. And I must add that such misrepresentations as the foregoing, representing Sweden as destitute of parochial relief, with the intention of disparaging our own system, are most reprehensible. I regret to say I shall have to present numerous instances of this nature, and of a still more glaring character, in other sections of the work of which this forms a part.

<sup>1</sup> Radcliff, Report on the Agric. of Flanders, p. 256. Este, Journey, &c. p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Radcliff, Report on the Agric. of Flanders, p. 256. Ray, Observations, &c. p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Este, Journey, &c., pp. 78, 83. Thicknesse, Journey through the Pais-bas.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Malthus, having denied that England either can or ought to sustain her poor, assigns three reasons why Holland has been able to do so: these are "her extensive foreign trade, her numerous colonial emigrations, compared with the smallness of her territory; and, lastly, the extreme unhealthiness of the country, occasioning a much greater average mortality than common in other states," (p. 546.) Respecting the two first reasons, they are not "very peculiar circumstances;" as compared with England, her foreign

\* Catteau, View of Sweden, p. 202.

† Bowen, Geography, vol. i. p. 935.

admiration. As to the nature of their laws, in reference to this great object, Dr. Macfarlan says, "from a review of the Dutch poor laws and regulations, it does not appear that they are materially different to our own<sup>1</sup>."

On thus examining the different states of Europe, it will be found, that the expense of maintaining the poor in other countries is, on the aggregate, and in proportion to their means, often greater than here; while the superiority of our system, with the exception of such countries as Holland and Sweden, and Switzerland, where, indeed, a similar one prevails, is too obvious to universal observation to need a word in proof.

Dr. Johnson has said, that "a decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization;" but such institutions are not, however, confined to Christendom. Even the semi-barbarous countries of the East have all of them some establishments of the same nature. The poor are very amply provided for by the laws of China<sup>2</sup>. "In India there is a considerable quantity of *enam*, or charity lands set apart for the maintenance of the poor<sup>3</sup>." By the institutions of Zoroaster, property is taxed one-tenth in order to be dispensed to

trade is not so great; and her colonial emigrations, in proportion to her population, far less also. But the last is the most singular of all reasons ever advanced. Remembering that Holland is far more densely peopled than this country—that the extreme unhealthiness of its inhabitants should enable them the better to sustain their poor, is one of the strangest ideas that ever entered into a man's head. No observations are wanting to point out its absurdity.

<sup>1</sup> Macfarlan, *Inquiries concerning the Poor*, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> Ta Tsing Leu Lee, or the Fundamental Laws of China; translated by Sir G. Staunton, Section lxxxix, "Care of the aged and infirm." See the whole section. See also Du Halde (vol. ii. p. 65), for a true definition of real charity.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Tennant, *State of India*, p. 246.

the poor, of which the priest is ordered to be merely the almoner<sup>1</sup>. The Koran of Mahomet is very explicit on the same duty<sup>2</sup>; nor are there wanting benevolent establishments wherever that religion prevails, though defective both as to their objects and administration. In Morocco there is a regular tax for the poor<sup>3</sup>; and, in the institutes of Timour or Tamerlane, we find provision was made for all the poor, throughout his extended empire<sup>4</sup>.

(10.) It may, perhaps, be expected some notice should be taken of the method of maintaining the poor by our northern fellow-subjects, which is deemed by many the very model of national charity. I think otherwise, for reasons that have been partly stated, and others which shall now be very briefly expressed. In the first place, it condemns the working-classes, generally speaking, to that penury of living in order to be able to provide for themselves, which, if universally adopted, would be fatal to our agricultural and manufacturing prosperity<sup>5</sup>: it subjects the whole country to "the nuisance of common begging<sup>6</sup>," and poverty to that sordid and filthy state which is a yet greater disgrace. This mendicity is "the pest that has long annoyed and oppressed her, since the union of the kingdoms, and probably long before it<sup>7</sup>." So that, when some of our olden writers were complaining of the burden of the poor-rates of England, Fletcher of

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Universal History, vol. ii. b. i. p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Al Koran, ch. 4, pp. 76, 117.

<sup>3</sup> Ali Bey, Travels in Morocco, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> Institutions of Timour, translated from the Persian by Major Davy. See p. 349, &c.

<sup>5</sup> Sinclair, Health and Longevity, p. 539.

<sup>6</sup> Edinburgh Encyc. vol. xvii. p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 90.

Saltoun deplored that, in Scotland, one-fifth of the people were in a state of actual mendicity, and great numbers dying yearly for want. Nor is it fair to draw comparisons as to the number of our own poor, who stand in need of relief, and who receive it, with such a district as Scotland, where the parsimony with which it is administered has the effect of sending great numbers across the border, to the great disparagement of the working-classes of England, whose labour is thus greatly interfered with both by the poor of Scotland and Ireland.

There are, however, poor laws in Scotland, and if they are neither so efficient nor so liberal as those of this country, it is no credit to the wealthy ; it is the result of an understanding among the rich to intercept that relief of the poor to which God and nature gave them a just claim, and which their own legislature has certainly awarded them<sup>1</sup>. They are, however, in partial operation, and that circumstance, combined with parochial funds, and the prevalent and disgraceful practice of begging superadded, make up the present practice of sustaining the poor of Scotland, excepting in those parishes where the English plan prevails, which is rapidly extending, and will be found essentially necessary, especially as manufactures prevail ; and I am happy in observing, that in Edinburgh and Glasgow the charitable establishments are as well supported as in towns of a similar magnitude in England. Elsewhere, however, the prospect is not so cheering : “Where the poor-law is not introduced,”

<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie, *Law of Scotland*, p. 317. Macfarlan, *Inquiries concerning the Poor*, pp. 199, 200.



we are informed, on the most unexceptionable authority, “there are a great many of the miseries which are found in Ireland<sup>1</sup>.”

I perhaps ought to mention the very strong objections which a celebrated divine of that country has recently made against a regular system of legal charity in Scotland, and more especially his opinions concerning our's, which he has expressed in the strongest manner. He has represented our poor as evincing, in their character and conduct, “an utter recklessness of habit; profligacy; mutual abandonment of parents and children<sup>2</sup>; rapacity<sup>3</sup>; shameless and abandoned profligacy<sup>4</sup>,” in a word, as being a herd of brutes without the instinctive feelings of the brute creation. This, I am sure, he will be glad to know, on more certain authority than casual observation can supply, is not the character of the poor—no, nor yet that of the relieved poor of England. Nor has he less mistaken, as I hope, the feelings with which they are regarded: the different ranks do not “look to each other with all the fierceness and suspicion of natural enemies,” nor “stand in the grim array of mutual hostility.” That such may be the representation in books of political economy, I will not dispute; but it is utterly untrue in real life. But, not to dwell on these topics, I will add, that if I object to the design Dr. Chalmers avows of taking away the “right of the poor,” in favour of some other plan of supporting them, my objections are greatly heightened when I

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Evidence before the Committee of the House of Lords on Ireland, 1824; A. Nimmo, Esq., p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Chalmers, Civic Economy, p. 229.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 347.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 239.

hear that plan explained. The making the poor the principal persons to relieve poverty, seems as contrary to reason and scripture, as the supposition that poverty, if properly dealt with, might be relieved without much, or, often, any assistance whatsoever, is to experience and common sense. The duties we owe to such are, I think, not to be discharged by "little presents of courtesy,"—"cheap and simple attentions,"—"nameless graces and benignities"<sup>1</sup>, and so forth. The wretchedness to be succoured is rarely of that pliable character to be thus tickled, by the empty hand of wealth, into mirth and ecstacy. On the point of divinity, it would ill become me to argue with him; otherwise I should have doubted whether we ought not to "charge the rich" to be ready to distribute to the constant necessities of the poor, rather than leave their relief principally to themselves: whether this "be thou warmed and be thou clothed" plan is that of Christianity; it is certainly not that which will satisfy our own feelings, or those of the poor, thus to serve them by "carrying about an alms-basket of words"<sup>2</sup>. As to Dr. Chalmers's, I am sure, unintentional, misstatements, utterly subversive, as I think, of his entire views, I shall attend to them on another occasion; in the mean time, I may safely leave it to him whether there is not a far more formidable foe in the path of true charity, than the one he has exclusively combated, I mean ostentation in giving, rather than ingratitude in receiving,—an evil which our christian poet Cowper has so admirably pourtrayed in his exhibition of Sunday-charity. Sure I am, that

<sup>1</sup> See Civic Economy.

<sup>2</sup> Shakspeare.

little is said by the Divine Exemplar of that virtue regarding the latter, and very much of the former danger. Nationally speaking, the poor-laws of England constitute, to all intents and purposes, a voluntarily charity; and, while we know that the benevolent object is fulfilled, individually we are well content to resign the consciousness of personal merit on the occasion. We rejoice that our poor are delivered by it from that uncertain and abject dependence, which is unbecoming the condition of our common nature, as well as contrary to the elevating dictates of our religion.

Dr. Chalmers, however, makes it out that the contrary system is the result of a "right and reflecting selfishness," and, in recommending his plan to England, thus expresses himself:—"We want England to put herself to school. We think that she needs to go to school; and, when looking attentively to those trial parishes, she is, in fact, learning the first lessons, and acquiring the sound rudiments of a sound education. Those parishes will be to her the alphabet, whence she may venture forward to achievements that are still more arduous; and at length be able to master those more complex and difficult results, which now lie removed, on a distant and impracticable background, from the eye of her understanding." To this I would only remark, that England needs no schooling to bring her to this state of national neglect of the poor: it is one from which she formerly emerged. We should soon be there again if, as one of our poets expresses it, "we could go, like a crab, backwards," and "subtilize ourselves into savages."

Another author of the same country, and an honour to it and his age, gives a different view of the subject, with whose opinion I shall conclude these allusions to Scotland. "It is a duty upon every political society," says Sir John Sinclair, "to provide for such unhappy individuals, as, from the poverty of their situation, from sickness, want of employment, and the various unavoidable misfortunes to which human nature is liable, are unable to maintain themselves; and in no country have these generous principles been carried to such an extent as in England, every native of it being entitled to demand subsistence in the parish in which he was born, or in which he has acquired a settlement<sup>1</sup>."

(11.) But to return to the general subject. In answer to all the preceding statements, it may be said, and, indeed, often has been, that the systematic relief of the poor only aggravates the evil it is meant to redress, and is but a relic of the remaining ignorance and prejudice of the old world. Political economy, through the medium of reviews and magazines, and encyclopedias, sends us to the new, in order to see society without what it considers as its disgrace, poverty and pauperism. "It is refreshing," they exclaim, "to cross the sea to the new world, to the United States, where land is in abundance, labour productive, industry almost unrestrained, and the condition of poverty seldom and little known<sup>2</sup>." State-

<sup>1</sup> Sinclair, *Hist. Revenue of the Brit. Emp.*, vol. iii. p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, Poor, p. 86. I quote this from a work which, notwithstanding this mistake, appears to be very ably conducted.

ments these which highly eulogized travellers confirm to us on their own authority. One of these, speaking of the same region, says, “where there are no idlers, and, more than all, no poor!”<sup>1</sup> infected, however, with the philosophic dread of population, they anticipate when the means of carrying off a superfluous population must fail, and then comes pauperism with all its train of evils. “The principle,” therefore, will not let them rest: they are alarmed for futurity; population, seen in embryo, haunts them perpetually, like Gay’s ghost of an unborn child, which appeared to frighten its guilty father into timely reparation.

All this would be very amusing, were it not for the mischief such false statements inflict upon those who credit them. A correspondent in the *Edinburgh Magazine* complains bitterly of being deceived into this opinion. “A late writer,” says he, “in the *Edinburgh Review*, says we have no poor rates. I wish he was correct. My poor rates, last year, amounted to ten dollars; although this township and the adjoining one have a workhouse with a farm of two hundred acres, and more, for the employment and support of the paupers. This, considering the high rate of wages, the cheapness of food, and full employment for every one, is more, in proportion, than any poor rates in England. There are sometimes from twelve to fifteen hundred persons in the workhouse in Philadelphia, and as many in that of New York. They cost, in Philadelphia, 100,000 dollars per annum,

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. F. de Roos, *Personal Narrative of Travels in the United States*, p. 24.

and the whole system is miserably conducted <sup>1</sup>." That this statement is correct there is not the least reason to doubt. I copy the following paragraph from an American paper, and it relates to the very period. "The cost of supporting the poor, in Philadelphia, has been diminished to that extent, that we understand it is in contemplation to reduce the annual assessment from 120,000 dollars to 90,000 <sup>2</sup>." In the somewhat larger city of New York, the annual expenses of maintaining the poor, we learn on the decisive testimony of Dr. Dwight, amounted, in the year 1811, to 154,388 dollars, 88 cents <sup>3</sup>: that there were 2,814 paupers admitted into the alms-house, from the 1st of April, 1822, to the 1st of April, 1813; of whom there were remaining, at the latter date, 1,265 persons <sup>4</sup>. Nor were these extraordinary years; on the contrary, the number of the poor has since greatly increased: we learn from Bristed, that a memorial addressed to the state legislature, in the month of March, 1817, stated, "that, during last winter, fifteen thousand paupers, that is to say, about a seventh of our whole population received alms <sup>5</sup>." He too takes up the European notion, that poor-laws ought to be abolished, and pauperism cured by being abandoned. In addition to this, it appears there are, of humane and charitable societies in that city, forty in number, which are supported with spirit. The expense of one of

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh Magazine, Letter dated May, 1825, p. 543.

<sup>2</sup> Philadelphia Gazette, Dec. 3, 1825.

<sup>3</sup> Dwight, Travels in New England and New York, vol. iii. pp. 455, 456.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 437.

<sup>5</sup> Bristed, America and her Resources, p. 288.



these, in 1816, is stated, by Warden, to have amounted to 39,053 dollars<sup>1</sup>. It needs not be added, that, in the other city just mentioned, Philadelphia, as well as in all others throughout the Union, similar institutions, to the high honour of the country, are established. But our traveller says, of America, “above all, there are no poor!”

Let it not be supposed, that this provision for the poor only became needful, or the burden it imposed heavy, as the population enlarged. Such, indeed, are the notions of our theorists, but nothing can be further from the fact than either. Only a short time after the settlers numbered only 21,200 souls, according to Mr. Malthus<sup>2</sup>, Sir Joshua Child wrote his *Discourses on Trade*; in which able work he distinguished New England as legally providing for its poor<sup>3</sup>. A quarter of a century after this, we still find that “the inhabitants had to meet once a month, sometimes every week, for relief of the poor.” In the other states, likewise, we know that there was early a settled provision made for them: in Virginia, for instance<sup>4</sup>; and the pressure their maintenance occasioned was proportionably the heaviest, when the population was the smallest. Thus in 1742, when Boston contained 1719 houses, and not many more than 16,000 inhabitants, there were 1000 poor widows; 111 persons in the alms-house, and 36 in the work-

<sup>1</sup> Warden, *Statistical, &c. Account of the United States*, vol. i. p. 535.

<sup>2</sup> *Essay*, p. 338.

<sup>3</sup> Child, *Discourse on Trade*, p. 88.

<sup>4</sup> *A Narrative of the Miseries of New England*, Complete Collection of Papers relating to the Revolution, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> *History of Virginia, by a Native*, part iii. p. 40 (1705).

house<sup>1</sup>. I shall close these hasty collections on the subject with the authority of Dr. Dwight. "Our laws," says that excellent writer, "provide effectually for the comfortable maintenance of all the poor, who are inhabitants, and so long as they reside with us; of poor strangers, in whatsoever country they were born; and, when they are sick, supply them with physicians, nurses, and attendants. The children of the poor are furnished with education, and apprenticed at the public expense. There is not a country upon earth, where the provision for the wants and sufferings of the poor is so effectual as New England<sup>2</sup>."

Thus it is that the poor amongst our transatlantic brethren are cared for—the poor of all countries, complexions, and conditions: not on the cheap wordy plan, now so much recommended, the "be thou warmed, be thou clothed" system; but at an expense which, considering all the circumstances of the country, is truly astonishing; and yet our reviews, and magazines, and books, our political economists and legislators, are perpetually appealing from the operation of our own national provision, to America! It is the most charitable construction that can possibly be put upon such conduct, to believe that they know nothing whatsoever on the subjects on which they express themselves the most confidently;—"this is the way of them."

(12.) But the force of this appeal may probably be thus evaded:—the provision for the poor in America, it may be said, is the relic of the ignorance and

<sup>1</sup> Holmes, *American Annals*, vol. ii. p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Dwight, *Travels in America*, vol. iv. p. 326.

prejudice they have inherited from their forefathers of England; and consequently the operation of the more enlightened system must not, after all, be sought for there. Be it so. There is a country, and one sufficiently near; great in extent and certainly not overburdened with population; vast in its means and fortunate in its position; in which the experiment might be tried with advantage; and there it has been tried: I mean France. We have heard much of her having been a political beacon; she has been yet more, a moral one. When she had trampled upon the rights of property, public and private, and revelled in the spoliation,—had put down her sacred institutions, and filled the land with dismay and suffering, she seized upon the sacred funds which the piety of preceding ages had accumulated in behalf of suffering humanity, and swept away the “right of the poor.” A man can have little faith in revelation, nor yet in a God, who does not believe that the anger of Heaven would kindle at such a heinous spoliation of the defenceless; and he must shut his eyes to past events not to see its tremendous manifestations. But not to allude to the moral character of the transaction any further, let us examine its policy. After having seised their funds, the Comité de Mendicité recommended no other mode of provision. The system of our regular and systematic relief was, and Mr. Malthus says “justly, stated by the French to be *la plaie politique de l’Angleterre la plus dévorante*,” (England’s most devouring political sore). He repeats, elsewhere, his admiration of their wise and proper conduct: “the

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay on Population, p. 536.

Committee de Mendicité at the beginning of the French revolution, very properly and judiciously rejected the establishment of such a system which had been proposed<sup>1</sup>." With these proper and judicious persons the rights of man had nothing to do with the rights of the poor man, that is, one too impotent either to oppose or assist them, and consequently a mere burden ; and this is a distinction seldom lost sight of in the liberality of the liberals, either in their theories or their practice.

It often happens, however, that men, influenced neither by principle nor feeling, may perpetrate acts infamous in themselves, which ultimately prove beneficial. It remains to be inquired whether this so highly extolled one of the French has turned out to be amongst that number. One advantage, I confess, it has been attended with : it has given an opportunity of putting the pernicious principles now afloat to the test, and, as far as experience may be permitted to decide, has disposed of them for ever. The "sore" of England, if her charity must be so denominated, we know ; has, then, the political chirurgery of France removed from that country the deformity of poverty by their rescissory operation ? Much is said about the pauperism in London ; let us compare it with that of Paris, the focus of the fashionables, and consequently of the superfluous wealth, of Europe ; and then let us see to which belongs the appellation of this "plaie la plus dévorante." And to end all disputes on the point, I will take one of the most expensive and burdensome years England has yet experienced ; since when, not-

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay on Population, p. 546.

withstanding the “absorbent” system of our modern quacks, the expenses of the poor have very considerably diminished; and if large sums did not appear on the face of the rates, which are in reality the wages of labour, the declension would appear still greater. We have particulars of the year 1813 published. In the year 1811, the metropolis contained a population of 1,009,546 souls: that number was doubtless increased in 1813, when there were 35,593 persons permanently relieved in and out of the several workhouses, and 75,310 occasionally, amounting in the whole to 110,903, and involving an expense of £517,181. Turn we now to Paris<sup>1</sup>. In the twelve arrondissemens, containing, in 1823, a population of 713,966 souls, the report of the Bureaux de Charité sums up as follows:

Total des indigens secourus à domicile ou autrement	-	125,500
Population des hôpitaux et hospices	-	61,500
		<hr/>
		187,000

To this appalling number must still be made many very heavy additions, such as *enfants-trouvés*, &c. &c. The expense of maintaining these I hold to be far the least important part of the examination. The twelve Bureaux of Charity, it appears, distributed 1,200,000 francs in money; 747,000 loaves of four pounds weight each; 270,000 pounds of meat; 19,000 ells of cloth; 7000 pairs of sabots, 1500 coverlets, &c.<sup>2</sup> But in the report from which I am quoting, it is added, that these bureaux form a part only of the public benevolent institutions of Paris; then follows an account of

<sup>1</sup> Population Abstracts for 1811. Poor Rate Returns for 1813; published by order, 1818; Appendix, pp. 631, 632, 633.

<sup>2</sup> Bulletin Universel, 1824, Geog., &c. tom. i. pp. 88, 89.

the various establishments, the numbers received into which, independently of schools, amounts to 75,200 : most of these, I presume, are included in the 61,500, as reported to be in the *hospitaux* and *hospices*. The report of the *Consul général des Hôpitaux* (année 1823) states, that the relief afforded to the indigent population of the capital, by his administration, amounted to 3,300,000 francs, of which the foundling hospitals absorbed a third. As to the private charities distributed, the article says, “on ne peut savoir le montant.” But the conclusion of this important report must not be omitted ; and I call the particular attention of those to it who are so loud in their admiration of the proper and judicious conduct of the French committee *de mendicité*, in rejecting the English *plaie la plus dévorante* ; it runs thus :—

“It is painful to terminate this enumeration of the relief given to the indigent of the capital, by the observation, that her streets, her quays, and all her public places are *filled with mendicants*<sup>1</sup> !”

These are distressing statements, and there is, alas ! no room to hope they are exaggerations : they receive a melancholy confirmation by the statistics of mortality. One third of the dead of Paris are buried at the public expense<sup>2</sup> !

It is hardly necessary to prove, that if Paris is thus circumstanced, the rest of a country to which its capital is every thing, is still more deplorably imbued with beggary. That it is not so effectually succoured, we may very safely conclude. An intelligent contributor to

<sup>1</sup> Bulletin Universel, Geog. et Stat., tom. i. p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Brewster's Edinburgh Encyc., Poor, p. 88.



the “*Bulletin Universel des Sciences*,” thus expresses himself upon this point. “Supposing that the relief given to the poor from the public revenues were throughout France, in the same proportion as the population of Paris, it would amount to 121,000,000 francs.” (It is plain he speaks only of the sums awarded to the maintenance of the poor from the public revenues; for if he had included those administered by the twelve *Bureaux de Charité*, which are, in addition, distributed in the different *arrondissemens*, the proportion would amount to about 200,000,000 francs.) “But this sum is evidently much exaggerated; for there exist administrations of charity only in our towns, and the poor in our rural communes are succoured by voluntary charitable donations only. One ought to feel astonished that we have not been obliged to have recourse to more efficacious means, after a revolution which has left us in the same situation as England found herself in under the reign of Elizabeth, when the ecclesiastical property, which was the patrimony of the unfortunate, had been alienated from them<sup>1</sup>.” He does, indeed, show that the evil of such a state of things is, in some degree, mitigated by the minute division of the large properties which were confiscated at the revolution; but few, I think, amongst us, are for thus curing ‘*la plaie*’ of pauperism amongst us. The wisdom of the gentlemen Mr. Malthus eulogizes so highly is therefore manifested in the vast expense which is now entailed upon the government, leaving the country still very inadequately

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin Universel*, tom. iv. p. 44.

relieved, and swarming from one end to the other with mendicants.

(13.) In proof that universal mendicancy is the alternative of having no poor-laws, I may safely refer to the testimony of any one who has travelled through that country; or indeed any other in the south of Europe, where there is no regularly organized system of public relief for the poor. No expense, however great—no establishments, however magnificent, seem to compensate the want of this. I shall only quote one or two authors, and leave the reader to contrast the situation of such countries, in regard to poverty and wretchedness, with those where there is a regular system of national relief, as in Switzerland, Sweden, Holland, and England. “Let the traveller,” says one of these, “start from the rock of Lisbon, and proceed through every part of Spain<sup>1</sup>, Italy, and France, and the wretchedness and beggary which prevails in every town, village, house, and even apartment, through all these christian catholic countries, can only be appreciated by those who have witnessed such scenes<sup>2</sup>. In Spain and Portugal, human misery and mendicity are certainly on a more extended scale than in France and Italy; but with this difference, that in the latter countries the profession is more matured and refined than in the former, where they content themselves

<sup>1</sup> Cervantes says, of his Governor of Barataria, that in ridding the streets of beggars and relieving the indigent, “he made and appointed an overseer of the poor, not to persecute, but to examine whether they were or were not real objects.” Precisely the law of England. May the fiction of that inimitable author become at length, as it respects his own country, a happy reality!

<sup>2</sup> Milford, *Observations during a Tour through France, &c.* vol. ii. p. 76.

with quietly exhibiting disease, of the most horrible description, on the road side, in the corners of streets, and at the gates of towns, begging the Almighty, or some favoured saint, to inspire you with charity. Vagabonds, and those born and educated in beggary, make no scruple to enter your apartments, whilst at your dinner or supper, shut the door, and with apparent humility persevere in their petition till it is granted. In France and Italy, the beggars possess a superior polish and perseverance; and it may be deemed an established maxim among them, that a refusal is not an answer. At post-houses, and towns where you pass through, they are as regular in their attendance at the door as the landlord or the waiter, and place themselves in positions to catch the eye, turn which way you will, making a monotonous buzz, like a distant swarm of bees. If you shut your eyes, or the window-blinds of your carriage, you voluntarily become a kind of state-prisoner, and of course are deprived of seeing the place and its inhabitants. But this will not always secure you from their importunity; for I have found it occur, that they will open the door of the carriage, and present such a countenance of real or fictitious misery, that I believe few travellers persevere in the resolutions they have formed under such unequal contests; at least I know, that whoever wishes to consult his ease or his health, had better not enter the lists with such opponents<sup>1</sup>.— In large cities, in coming out of one house, you are fairly hunted till you get into another: the fraternity,

<sup>1</sup> Milford, *Observations during a Tour through France, &c.* vol. ii. p. 80.

however, appear to have this point of etiquette, that only one hunts you at a time; but, before you are out of sight of the former beggar, whom you have relieved, you are considered fair game for the rest of the pack. These scenes of misery every day presenting themselves, have been the subject of my reflections during many a solitary ramble through Europe.<sup>1</sup> Such is an extract from the description of the paupers of France, as well as Italy and Spain, given by a very intelligent modern traveller. But if authorities, more universally known, are preferred, I will give the same facts in the language of Kotzebue. It concerns a country and a city, whose numerous and splendid charitable establishments Eustace eulogizes so highly; Naples. "It is," says Kotzebue, "crowded with beggars, whose number defies all calculation.—I feel it, indeed, a fruitless task for my pen to attempt a description of the scenes I have witnessed, and I lay it down in despair. But no! what I can tell, is as much as need be known of human misery. As we step out of our house, twenty hats and open hands are stretched out towards us. We cannot take ten steps in the street without meeting a beggar, who crosses our path, and, with groans and piteous exclamations, solicits our mite. Women, often dressed in black silk, and veiled, intrude themselves impudently upon us. Cripples, of all sorts, hold up their stump of a leg or an arm close to our eyes. Noseless faces, devoured by disease, grin at us. Children quite naked, nay, even men, are to be seen, lying and moaning in the dirt. A dropsical man sits by a wall, and shows us

<sup>1</sup> Milford, *Observations, &c.* vol. ii. p. 81. See the following pages.

his monstrous belly. Consumptive mothers lie by the road-side, with naked children in their laps, who are compelled to be continually crying aloud. If we go to church, we must pass between a dozen such deplorable objects at the door, and when we enter, as many fall down on their knees before us. Even in our dwellings, we are not free from the painful spectacle. If we open the balcony-door, the sighs re-echo from below<sup>1</sup> :—

But I will pursue the quotation no further. Some may think that they would be proof against all this importunity, under the idea that much of it is urged under fallacious pretences. But who can determine, and consequently who, with a heart, dare refuse? This author gives an awful proof of the distressing predicament in which any man must be placed under such circumstances, and even in his own country, were there no provision for the poor. He saw one of these importunate wretches die in the street while supplicating—die of hunger! He attests it, and the date, December the 4th, 1804, and adds, “N.B. The king rode past to-day, to the chase, with twenty or thirty dogs, all in excellent condition<sup>2</sup>”. Horses and dogs, we are told, are granaries for the poor<sup>3</sup>. I shall take another opportunity of showing the error of this notion, likewise, from fiscal data.

That a better system will ultimately prevail in the countries last referred to, there is little doubt. The enemies of poor-laws must prepare themselves for their extension, instead of anticipating their extinction.

<sup>1</sup> Kotzebue, Travels through Italy, vol. i. pp. 251, 252.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 217, 218.

<sup>3</sup> Malthus, Essay on Pop.

Mendicity, which will inevitably prevail wherever there is no legal relief for the poor, has more than all the disadvantages of the latter, without any of its benefits. As an intelligent traveller observes, “without some sort of eleemosynary public establishment,” which he says is wanting, generally speaking, in Italy, the wretchedness is extreme, and “charity becomes hopeless”. He adds, however, that in Venice, “a system something approaching to our mode of providing for the indigent poor, has been adopted, where a sort of chest has been formed for their relief, out of contributions levied on the richer inhabitants, backed by donations from the government<sup>2</sup>”. He adds, “a great change has been, in this respect, wrought in Venice,” as, before, “it was crowded with half-starved wretches, like other parts of Italy<sup>3</sup>.”

(14.) I cannot but remark here, that in this respect the condition of the Irish poor is still more deplorable. They too are beggars, they importune in still greater multitudes ; but they have few of the splendid establishments so much talked of in other countries ; and instead of troops of foreigners arriving, and spending amongst them the revenues obtained elsewhere, they are almost totally deserted by their own natural protectors. In search of employment<sup>4</sup> and of bread, they wander in every direction<sup>5</sup> ; they are chased back from the city<sup>6</sup> ; intercepted on the high-ways ; and driven from the villages<sup>7</sup> ; and with greater apologies for beg-

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, Letters from the North of Italy, vol. i. p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 131, 132.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Drs. Baker and Cheyne, vol. ii. p. 165.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 41, 71, 85, 91, 317, 371, 373.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 138.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 142.



ging than any other people upon earth, they are the least tolerated in availing themselves of this last resource of suffering humanity. Let not the enemies of their species attribute this to their numbers; these must again be reminded that such was their fate when the population of the country was in the most scanty state<sup>1</sup>.

Mendicancy, therefore, has not, and never can be, put down in Ireland, till a national system of relief be adopted; in the mean time, independently of the disgrace and suffering which the want of it occasions, it has been asserted, on a careful calculation, that the present plan of relieving distress is, in comparison to the number of the inhabitants and their means, far more burdensome than that occasioned by the poor-laws of England<sup>2</sup>.

Let, then, Englishmen judge which best merits the appellation of *la plaie la plus dévorante*,—their system of sustaining the poor, or this pest of society, universal mendicity, with all its inevitable train of deceit, disgrace, immorality, disease, and suffering? We are placed in this dilemma; without a systematic plan of relief for the poor, the very idea of discountenancing mendicity is infinitely too cruel to be practicable anywhere. This point at least needs no arguing; Lord Hale has as clearly settled it in his little piece on the poor-laws as he ever did any question in the court of King's Bench<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Boulter, Letters, vol. i. p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Evidence before the Lords' Committee, 1824, p. 264; A. Nimmo, Esq.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Hale; Burn, Hist. Poor Laws, p. 150.

(15.) I turn from the contemplation of this state of things, infinitely more disgraceful to the rich than to the poor, wherever it exists, to a very different picture. I shall not instance England, though I think I well might, after what has been seen, but appeal to one of the most interesting countries in Europe, in all respects, where a system of sustaining the poor very similar to ours prevails—the kingdom of the Netherlands. In the year 1823, an official report was made to the States General, upon the “*établissements de bienfaisances et de l’éducation des Pays-Bas*”<sup>1</sup>. We have already, in reviewing the agriculture of the Netherlands, seen that there a beggar is scarcely to be found. From this report, however, it appears there are 2,285 mendicants; the number is triumphantly small. But, though there is so little begging allowed, there is poverty; but it is treated as poverty ought always to be, not thrown prominently forth on accidental charity, but quietly and regularly retired, protected, and sustained. The population of the kingdom is stated at 5,721,724; the number of those who are at the “*charge publique*,” and whom we should, perhaps, disdainfully call paupers, exclusively both of the “*ateliers de charité*,” whom we should certainly class with them, and of those who receive education at the public expense, is 682,185, or near an eighth part of the entire population<sup>2</sup>. Hear this, ye dissatisfied Englishmen! Nor have they got, as yet, the divine knack of feeding them upon words:

<sup>1</sup> See Bulletin Universel, Avril, 1825, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Rapport fait aux Etats-Generaux, for 1822. Bulletin Universel, Geog. et Stat., tom. v., pp. 19, 165.

they expend upon them, exclusively of education, 10,212,976 florins. In this report, the provinces are divided into southern and northern; the latter, including old Holland, one is curious to examine, from the circumstance of the merited celebrity that country has enjoyed for ages, in the preservation of its poor. The population of the nine northern provinces is stated at 2,148,339, their poor at 196,053 persons: but the Dutch, continuing their habits of humane attention to their poor, expended no less a sum, on this smaller number, than 5,955,030 florins<sup>1</sup>, or about thirty florins each; something more, I think, than three quarters of wheat, at the average Amsterdam prices of that year<sup>2</sup>. I have not in my possession any returns of the number of paupers, in that year, in England and Wales; but, to recur to the year 1813, already referred to, there were then 971,913, on whom was expended £6,679,657, or about ten bushels each, not half the former quantity: now, however, the fall in grain has increased that allowance; but still, I fear, we fall far short of the Dutch in care of, and liberality to, our poor<sup>3</sup>.

Here, then, is the real secret of the management of the poor of Holland; it is not that she has an extensive foreign trade, or sends forth numerous colonial emigrations, or that she possesses an extremely unhealthy country (these are the reasons of such as conceive that the only way to cure poverty is to expel or desert it): no! those who live at the public

<sup>1</sup> Rapport fait aux Etats-Generaux, for 1823, tom. v. p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> See Foreign Corn Returns, published March, 1826.

<sup>3</sup> Poor-rate Returns for 1813, published 1818.

cost are, proportionably, at least as numerous as are such in England ; but generous and unwearied attention to wretchedness and distress is her plan. Perpetually accused of selfishness, where is generosity like this to be found?—of coldness, where does the flame of Christian charity burn with so bright and so steady a flame, as in Holland? Possessed of a narrow untractable territory, and an unpropitious climate, loaded with taxes and with a declining trade ; still she sets an example to every nation upon earth ; which speaks as loudly as human conduct can, Go and do thou likewise !

I will close these remarks on the poor-laws of Holland, by an anecdote which, to me, is very impressive, as evincing that there is something in the very nature of charity that strikes those hearts that are dead to every other duty, and which inspires their deepest reverence even where it fails to excite their imitation. “ When the Duke of Lotherdal, jeering about the fate of Holland, then threatened by Louis, and basely deserted by Charles the Second, said that oranges would be scarce when the French should have plundered Amsterdam, Charles, who knew Holland well, as a resident there, interrupted his mirth, and, for once serious, replied : ‘ I am of opinion that GOD will preserve Amsterdam from being destroyed, if it were only for the great charity they have for their poor<sup>1</sup>.’ ” Difficulties environ our own country, at present ; a storm seems gathering, and the future prospect darkens ; let us cover our manifold offences with this divine mantle ; let us lay hold of the weakness of the Deity, if I dare so to express myself : let

<sup>1</sup> Ker, of Kersland, Remarks on Holland, part iii. p. 34.

us increase our attentions to our own poor; and perform a solemn act of justice and mercy in behalf of those of Ireland, without delay. "If merits, in an individual, are sometimes supposed to be rewarded in this world, I do not think it too presumptuous to suppose, that national virtues may likewise meet with their blessings. England has, to its peculiar honour, not only made its poor free, but hath provided a certain and solid establishment, to prevent their necessities and indigence, when they arise from what the law terms 'the act of GOD.' And are not these beneficent attentions to the miseries of our fellow-creatures the first of those poor pleas which we are capable of offering in behalf of our imperfections to an all-wise and merciful Creator<sup>1</sup>?"

(16.) With the sacred feelings which such a passage as this leaves upon the mind, it is painful to return to controversy. But the cause demands it, and the stronghold of the adversaries of the poor-laws has still to be attacked, and one against which, in many cases, neither right, nor reason, nor revelation can make the least impression: I mean the stronghold of selfish interest. The country has been taught to regard the national charity not merely as a vast national burden, but as a growing one; threatening to "absorb" (to use the fashionable term of the day) the entire property of the kingdom. Mr. Malthus told us, in 1803, that more than one half of the population was reduced to the condition of paupers<sup>2</sup>. Another celebrated authority tells us gravely,

<sup>1</sup> Barrington, *Ancient Statutes*, p. 481.

<sup>2</sup> Malthus, p. 536.

if I recollect right, that, in England, seven parts of the population are sustained by the remaining eighth : as to the expense, the latter does not so much regard it ; but the former says, that his supposition “ of a collection from the rich of eighteen shillings in the pound has been nearly realized <sup>1</sup>,” and that it had been justly stated, that the system was an evil in comparison with which “ the national debt, with all its magnitude of terror, is of little moment <sup>2</sup>.” One would really think that such statements as these require no notice, and that they would render any views and opinions founded upon them utterly valueless ; but, no ! such authorities continue to be consulted and appealed to.

I shall only say, as it regards one of these assertions, that instead of one man amongst us supporting seven paupers, ten or a dozen of us are contriving to assist one. As to Mr. Malthus’s, that the poor-rates had nearly amounted to eighteen shillings in the pound, and that above one-half of us were paupers ; at the very time he was publishing this, an exact account of the number of the poor, and the rates for their support, was in the act of being taken throughout England and Wales, and his “ suppositions were nearly realized,” thus :—The number of the poor were 725,568 ; and as the population was, in 1801, 9,168,000, in 1803 they were certainly not one-thirteenth of the whole, instead of “ the largest half :” then the amount collected was £5,348,205, being, as the report says, “ an actual rate on the rack-rental of England and Wales of 2s. 10d. in

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, p. 399.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 536.



the pound<sup>1</sup>; but £1,270,314 of that sum were disbursed in county and other rates, militia allowances, &c.; so that the sum expended on the poor was only 2s. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. precisely. But even this statement conveys a very erroneous idea as to the pressure of the poor's-rate: it should be kept in mind, that it is not the landlord, but the cultivator that pays this rate; and as the produce of the land is rarely estimated at less in value than three rents, generally four (it then averaged far more), the poor had only 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound, at the most, on that produce, or considerably less than four per cent.; inclusive of what was contributed by traders and manufacturers (which was very little), and nothing whatsoever from the great ship-owners, or from the fundholders of the kingdom, as such. Including these amongst the rich, of whom Mr. Malthus speaks as having to support the poor, by a collection of eighteen shillings in the pound; and I defy him to prove that there was a collection of eighteen farthings in the pound on their behalf, and, excluding such altogether, of so many halfpence.

(17.) But, leaving these calculations, let us next inquire whether, since that period, the poor's-rate has manifested that constant tendency to increase, so as to merit the appellation of being so *dévorante*; threatening to "absorb" the whole rental and property of the country; for that is the argument, appealing as it does to the fears of the selfish, on which these impugners of our poor-laws mainly rely. In 1803, we have seen the sums expended on the poor amounted to £4,077,891; at present (1827), I imagine they

<sup>1</sup> Poor-Rate Returns, 1803, p. 716.

may amount to five millions and a half, or rather more. In the former period, the paupers amounted to 725,568; at present, I conceive, they do not reach a million: then the rental of the kingdom was estimated at £38,000,000<sup>1</sup>; in 1815, it was stated, on the data furnished by the property-tax, at about £52,000,000; and, considering the vast creations of property since that period, notwithstanding the depressions and fluctuations to which it has been subject (with which the poor have had no more to do than the Pindarees of India), can it be estimated at less at present? Where then is the proof, I ask, that the poor, or the expenses of sustaining them, are increasing in an undue proportion, compared with the population and property of the country?

But supposing some of the preceding items should be captiously objected to it, I have a set-off of that weight and magnitude which will at once silence all such cavils. There is included in the amount returned, as expended on the relief of the poor, a vast sum which is, to all intents and purposes, the wages of necessary labour; and amongst the number returned as paupers many are active labourers, in full and constant employment. At present, I have nothing to do with the cruelty of this conduct, or the motives by which it is inspired; those are sufficiently developed elsewhere: I shall only now state the fact (and that on the highest authority), that it is the result of a conspiracy, against which the poor are utterly powerless, “absorbing” the whole of the labourers of entire parishes, and extending to many counties, especially

<sup>1</sup> Report, Poor Laws, 1804, folio.

those where the poor-rates are represented as the highest, and paupers as the most numerous. This pernicious system has grown up principally within the last quarter of a century, or during the period we are examining. It is difficult to estimate the extent to which it has been carried; but one thing is certain, if the statistics of poverty were purified of this shocking perversion,—pauperism has been a greatly diminishing, rather than an increasing evil, during this century. I mean not that those should be deducted who, having large families, receive assistance: to relieve such, notwithstanding Mr. Malthus warns us on this head, was one of the designs of the national charity, and has ever been attended to; a provision evidently for the public good, because it enables those who demand labour to fix its remuneration, so as to meet the average wants of those who furnish it. Hence, wherever poor-laws have been established, as in Holland<sup>1</sup>, in Switzerland<sup>2</sup>, and in Sweden<sup>3</sup>, such has been one of the declared legitimate objects of the institution; as to our own, old Dalton says, interpreting them almost immediately after their enactment, that among those legally entitled to relief, is the “poore man overcharged with children<sup>4</sup>.” To this it will suffice, I think, if we add the authority of Lord Hale<sup>5</sup>. But Mr. Malthus recommends that, even in apportioning little spots of land for the cultivation of the poor, “too much attention should not be paid to the number of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Armstrong, Works, vol. ii. p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Spirit of Legislation, on Switzerland, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> James, Tour in Sweden, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> Dalton, Country Justice, 1619, folio, ch. xl. p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> On the Poor. See Burns, Hist. of the Poor Laws, p. 145.

children<sup>1</sup>," dependent poverty being, according to him, disgraceful. Hear, however, what a different authority, in all respects, says on this point:—"Let us," says William Pitt, "make relief, where there are a number of children, a matter of right, and an honour, instead of a ground of opprobrium and contempt. This will make a large family a blessing, and not a curse, and draw a proper line of distinction between those who are able to provide for themselves by their labour, and those who, after having enriched their country with a number of children, have a claim upon its assistance for their support<sup>2</sup>."

(18.) But to return. Confident that this *argument ad crumenam*, however it may be kept in the back-ground, is the main one on which the adversaries of our national charity rely, and by which they successfully resist the extension of it to Ireland; so that it is in vain you talk of justice, when you are answered by "so much in the pound," or of mercy, when you are threatened with "the absorption of rents;" let us, in proceeding with the present inquiry, meet such on their own ground.

As it has been already sufficiently shown that,

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay, p. 589.

<sup>2</sup> Pitt, Speech on Whitbread's Bill. Eden's Hist. of the Poor, vol. iii. Appendix, p. cccxi. See, also, the benevolent Firman on this subject; Proposals, &c. p. 14, published 1681. As so much is said at present about the policy of deserting children, I quote the following passage: "Queen Elizabeth and her ministers had no conception of barbarity towards infants, nor dreamt of such false parsimony as to save other people's money, to alienate from a child the necessary means of support. The poor's law has fully provided for them, by virtue of one of the most plain, christianlike plans, that ever entered into the heart of prince or subject."—(Jonas Hanway, Importance of the Poor, vol. i. p. 171.)

during the current century at least, these representations, touching the relative increase of pauperism and the expense it occasions, are manifestly erroneous, we shall now extend the inquiry up to the period of the first establishment of the national charity. And in doing this, it will be again necessary to correct the inadvertency of those who have of late years written so much on the subject, and, I am sorry to add, of those who have put forth documents relative to it. Inadvertency, I said; I fear, however, it occasionally merits a harsher term: for I see in it the prevalent disposition of stating those facts, and those only, which subserve a particular purpose, without much regard to their nature, their connexion, or even their correctness.

(19.) However this may be, it is much to be regretted that successive committees of the House of Commons have unintentionally fallen into error on this subject. They have assumed, without, as it appears to me, sufficient examination, the correctness of an important document, on this point, lately put forth, in which the sum of £689,971 is given as the total amount expended in the maintenance of the poor of England and Wales, on the average of the three years 1748, 1749, and 1750. In proceeding to prove the utter incorrectness of that account, I shall make a few previous remarks. Since that period, it is well known that numbers of returns, on the same subject, have been made to parliament, the later ones only having any claim to correctness: even in this century, we are informed, in the observations appended to the two voluminous reports of 1803, and of 1813, 1814 and

1815, that they err materially in deficiency, especially the former one, as might be expected; for it is in the very nature of such statistical accounts to become more complete as the necessary inquiries are more familiarized to the people, and when those suspicions, which are always at first excited on such occasions, are allayed. But, to return to the last century. There were returns of the expenses for the maintenance of the poor, for the years 1776 and 1784. Some of these the late Mr. Gilbert, well known as having devoted the labours of his parliamentary life to the subject, was mainly instrumental in obtaining, and yet we find him pronouncing, in his place, in parliament, and in his numerous publications on the subject, that, when he had obtained them, they were grossly defective<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, it is a recorded fact, that the order for their production was, at that time, very reluctantly complied with throughout the country. According to Mr. Gilbert, they were deficient several hundred thousand pounds; he states, that “the sum raised for the relief and maintenance of the poor is not inferior, perhaps superior, to that raised by the land tax, at four shillings in the pound<sup>2</sup>.” In short, he estimated the poor rates of 1775 at £2,000,000, at the least<sup>3</sup>, and those of 1786 at £2,500,000<sup>4</sup>. The errors in these documents are now, however, wholly lost sight of, and their defects,

<sup>1</sup> Collection of Tracts concerning the Poor, 4to. 1787, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert, Speech, 27th March, 1775; Parliamentary Register, vol. i. p. 371.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert, Plan for the Better Relief, &c. p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Some Reflections on the Poor Rates; Collection of Pamphlets, &c. p. 104.



like those of legal titles, are, it appears, fully remedied by age. If this mode will suffice, there is a yet older official return concerning the charge of maintaining the poor, obtained about the conclusion of the seventeenth century, under the direction of John Locke, at the instance of the then government. This makes the amount to be £184,735 18s. 6d.: why, then, is not this sum placed at the head of those now given in the reports of our select committees? It would make a far more convenient radix for calculations concerning this “devouring sore” than even that of 1750. It is not improbable but it may, at length, find a place there, though there is this reason why it would not be quite a decisive datum, even were it so legitimized, namely, there were only 4,415 parishes that made any returns whatsoever on that occasion; the correctness of those actually received may be judged of accordingly. The number of those in the last large abstract (1818) is stated to be 14,640. Supposing, then, the returns wanting at the former period averaged the same in amount as those furnished (no unfair presumption), and even allowing those furnished to have been complete (certainly a very liberal one), there were upwards of six hundred thousand pounds expended on the poor at that period. We know, however, from other quarters, that this was much short of the actual amount.

But these returns of 1750, found, it appears, in the Speaker’s closet, are to be now taken as correct, notwithstanding all manner of evidence to the contrary. Fielding, who very much interested himself about the poor-laws, and who wrote on the subject the

very year following, and who, consequently, could not have been ignorant of them, nevertheless says, that the tax for providing for the poor (independently of every other kind of charity) equalled, frequently, in amount, that of the land tax, then about two millions<sup>1</sup>. Ten years before this, we are assured by Sir Matthew Decker (an authority of great celebrity, as I perceive, at present), that it amounted at least to £1,960,000<sup>2</sup>. Hanway, a writer incapable of falsification, and certainly not to be suspected of ignorance on this subject, for it was the business of his benevolent life to attend to it, estimates the rates<sup>3</sup>, a few years after this supposed true return, at £1,500,000<sup>4</sup>, and, according to his contemporaries, at a low calculation<sup>5</sup>; at all events, Alcock<sup>6</sup>, Postlethwayt<sup>7</sup>, D'Angueil<sup>8</sup>, and many others,

<sup>1</sup> Fielding, *An Inquiry*, &c. (1751), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Decker, *Essay on Foreign Trade*, p. 33. (1740.)

<sup>3</sup> Farmer's Letters, p. 308. <sup>4</sup> Hanway, *Letters on the Defects of the Police*, &c. letter xii. p. 101, 4to.

<sup>5</sup> The error of Mr. Hanway, evidently one on the side of deficiency, originated thus: having obtained the probable amount of the poor's rate, within the bills of mortality, he assumed that ten times that sum might be taken as the total for the whole kingdom; it is now manifest that, in thus calculating, he used far too low a multiplier. Mr. Maitland says the poor's rate within the bills of mortality, previously to 1739, was £90,835 4s. 5½d., exclusive of public charities to a still greater amount. How is this sum reconcilable with that put forth by the select committees as that levied on the whole country ten years afterwards? All the documents I have seen relative to the subject, public or private, prove the latter to be preposterously incorrect, though it is now constantly appealed to, as the standard of our calculations in proof of the supposed relative increase in our poor-rates.

<sup>6</sup> Alcock, *Observations on the Defects*, &c. This author fixes on £3,000,000 as the sum expended on the poor; and, singular to remark, appeals to the parliamentary returns of 1750, in verification of his assertion.

<sup>7</sup> Postlethwayt, *Dict. Commerce*, vol. ii. p. 491. He fixes the tax at £3,500,000.

<sup>8</sup> D'Angueil, *Avantages et Desavantages*, &c. p. 308. His estimate also is £3,500,000.

who wrote at that period, fixed the amount at a far higher sum. Mr. Hanway's, as the lowest estimate I have ever met with, I shall adopt.

Perfectly certain, from the strong representations, as to the poverty and distress which prevailed at that period, and the heavy burden which its relief occasioned, complaints of which meet one's notice in every publication at all touching upon such topics, that the low sum set down as that of the poor's rate of England, in 1750, amounting to only a few pence in the pound on the then rental, could not possibly be correct; I attempted to ascertain this by actual calculations, and, for this purpose, had extracted the sums raised, in many parts of the country, at that period, from various topographical and historical works; by which I was fully convinced that nothing could be further from the truth than that the sums expended on our poor had, since that period, decupled in amount. But I found this method of disproving the correctness of the document was unnecessary: its utter worthlessness is not a matter of calculation, but a matter of history. Accidentally, I cast my eyes upon this account of the whole affair, in Tindal's continuation of Rapin, the very exordium of which is quite sufficient to disprove the correctness of the return in question. "Never was there a time," says the historian, speaking of the 25th of Geo. II. (1751), "when so much money was raised for the poor as was raised then, and yet they were never worse provided for. This came to be a very serious matter of inquiry, and the house had ordered an account of the total sums of money, annually assessed

in England and Wales, towards the relief of the poor, from Easter 1747 to Easter 1750, to be returned to their clerk, together with the number of work-houses for the poor. The order of the house being a little too indefinite, was *very much disregarded*, and the house required the justices of the peace of the several counties to see it now put into execution<sup>1</sup>." The returns, in consequence of this order, a "little too indefinite and very much disregarded," have, however, it appears, been found in the Speaker's closet, and are now taken to be quite correct, and are passed to the public as such, "without note or comment." Worthless, then, and thrown aside, they have become good, like wine, by keeping; the additional value of which a professor of political economy (the same who has assured us absenteeism is no evil) gravely assures us ought to be resolved into "the value of the additional labour laid out upon it," which idea he illustrates by a reference to time and place, which I confess I cannot comprehend<sup>2</sup>. It is perfectly deceptive, therefore, to appeal, year after year, to this item. The document is, on the confession of those to whom it was addressed, perfectly useless: our better reliance, therefore, must be on those competent authorities, who lived at the very period and afterwards, who directed their particular attention to the subject. These, doubtless aware of its existence, wholly disregarded it, as imperfect; depending upon their own personal and better means of information, in estimating this part of the national expenditure.

<sup>1</sup> Rapin, Hist. of England; Tindal's Cont., vol. xxi. pp. 448, 449.

<sup>2</sup> McCulloch, Principles of Polit. Economy, vol. iii. p. 313.

But next, as touching another and far more important document, that preserved by Davenant, and formed, as he assures us, with great care, and at much expense, by Arthur Moore, one of the most accurate statistical writers of his time, and who could have no possible inducement to impose upon his countrymen, in this particular, had it been practicable. Some attempts have been made of late, not indeed to disparage the fidelity of that individual, but to represent the sums he gives for each county, as calculations founded on some other data, and as mere assumed proportions, rather than as the results of an actual collection of facts. This idea is singular enough, and proves to what lengths those who labour to show “the increasing burden of the poor’s-rate” will go. We are expressly informed by Davenant, in the remarks which accompany the table, that it was “collected with great labour and expense,” and is given as the “medium of several years;” and what fully establishes our reliance upon these assertions is, the candour manifested about one part of this important document: he informs us, the sum assigned to Wales (£33,753) was not derived from actual accounts, but “according to the proportion Wales bears to the rest of the kingdom in other taxes<sup>1</sup>.” A slight examination of the table, in which there are twelve columns, containing sundry fiscal accounts, will instantly show that the sums fixed to the counties of England, severally, have no relation to any of these. It is quite impossible that a fair and candid document of this nature can err on the side of excess; and it is hardly less so, but that it should err

<sup>1</sup> Davenant, *Ways and Means*, p. 79.

in deficiency ; and we accordingly find the total amount falls considerably short of computations which were made by other intelligent persons at about the same period. The first item in the table that I shall subjoin to these remarks, I give on the authority of Colquhoun : from whence he derived it, I do not recollect at present ; but that it is no exaggeration, I think will appear clear, if the reader will refer to what Spelman says of the burden of sustaining the poor in the early part of the reign of James I. ; and it should be remarked, that the alienated abbey lands were then chargeable with considerable sums in addition, applicable to the purposes of charity, which incumbrances were afterwards redeemed.

(20.) Having, in a work of which this forms a part, when showing the effect of a growing population on the happiness and prosperity of all communities, spoken at large on the state of England in former periods, contrasting especially the condition of the lower and the lowest ranks of society (with whom the proof must chiefly rest) with what it is at present, I must refer to that part in proof that the distresses sustained by the poor, during the period I am about to particularise, were far more severe than they are at present. The multitude of these, their want of employment, and extreme misery, is dwelt upon by writers of every class—religious, moral, or political ; and many times, during the seventeenth century, was the melancholy fact pronounced from the throne<sup>1</sup>, and pressed

<sup>1</sup> King James I., Works, p. 567. See also “ a Collection of Kings’ Speeches,” *passim*.



upon the most serious attention of the legislature<sup>1</sup>. But as the present argument seems to require that some proof should be now adduced that the number of the paupers was at least as proportionately great then as at present, in order to prove that a system of national charity has not, as is ignorantly alleged, a tendency to constantly increase the numbers of its dependents, but the reverse, I shall present a few extracts (and they shall be but few), in which numbers actually occur, omitting such where a vast but uncertain number is alone mentioned.

Gregory King, who wrote in the time of Charles II., and whose calculations are inserted in Davenant's works, and adopted by him, says, "the number of people, who are a burden upon the other part, amount to 1,330,000 souls<sup>2</sup>." Another writer, about this period, and who seems to have been patronized by government, mentioning the many "hundred thousands" of beggars and paupers, says, "at least one hundred

<sup>1</sup> Besides Kings' Speeches, Debates in Parliament, Statutes at Large, and other public documents, every writer on the state of the nation, or its commerce, of any note, dwells upon the multitudes and the distresses of the poor. I will refer the reader to a few of them. Adam More, *Bread for the Poor*, 1623, pp. iii. iv. v. &c. Cock, 1651, *Summary Survey*, pp. 49, 50, 67, 148, &c. Sir Joshua Child, 1669; *Essay on Trade*, pp. 62, 87, 105, &c. Yarranton; *England's Improvement*, pp. 53, 61, &c. *Proposals for building Workhouses*, &c., 1677, pp. 1, 2, 3, 16. *True English Interest*, 1684, Preface, p. ii. &c. Sir William Petty, *Political Arithmetic*, p. 15, &c. Davenant, *Works*, vol. ii. p. 204. Lord Hale, *On the Poor*, p. 17. Filmer, *Collection of Tracts*, p. 8. John Locke, pp. 244, 245. Carey, *Discourse on Trade*, 1700, p. 110. Paxton, *Discourse on Trade*, 1704. Eden, vol. i. If the representations of any, or all, of these are to be credited, nothing we sustain now, in regard to the burden of the poor, can be compared with what was then endured.

<sup>2</sup> Davenant, *Works*, vol. ii. p. 180.

thousand of these were without employment<sup>1</sup>." Yarrenton had before made the same estimate<sup>2</sup>. Braddon, in his "Abstract of a Bill for employing the Poor," says, "there were above 1,200,000 chargeable poor," at that period<sup>3</sup>; of which number about one-tenth were in the metropolis<sup>4</sup>: the whole number in Britain this writer makes 1,500,000<sup>5</sup>; which addition of 300,000 for Scotland, clearly agrees with Fletcher of Saltoun's evidence of the pauperism and mendicity of the latter country at that period. Bellars estimated the number of paupers in England, *being out of work*, in the year 1714, at 500,000<sup>6</sup>. Gee, a writer of much credit and celebrity in his day, and still often consulted, estimates the number, *out of work*, in Great Britain and Ireland, at "above a million of people<sup>7</sup>." As the population enlarged, and industry became consequently more encouraged and better rewarded, pauperism diminished; but still, about the year 1760, we find the chargeable poor of England alone reckoned at 700,000<sup>8</sup>, or an eighth part of the people, according to the author's estimate of the population. Another writer falls somewhat short of the preceding calculation, making the number "more than 600,000<sup>9</sup>"; and with him I shall close this hasty collection, as it brings us up to the period when we

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Proposals for building in every County a Working Alms-house, &c., pp. 3, 16, 4to. 1677.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Yarrenton, England's Improvement, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Braddon, Abstract, &c. p. iii. 1704.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. xi.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> Bellars, Proposals for employing the Poor.

<sup>7</sup> Gee, Trade and Navigation of Great Britain, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> Present State of Great Britain, p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> Reflections on the Domestic Policy, &c. p. 87, 1763.

begin to have something like certain data on which to found our calculations.

Those who may be disposed to controvert these statements, under the idea that they are more competent to make accurate calculations, than those who were cotemporary with the facts they record, will yet have to dispose of the entire history of poverty during all these periods, before they can make room for their notions. They will have to deny every representation of the condition of the lower ranks of society, whether made from the throne, the pulpit, or the press ; and brand with falsehood whole generations of their ancestors, who described the condition of that poverty which they so deeply commiserated, and persevered in relieving, at such immense exertions. They never dreamt of such proposals as those which are now publicly and unblushingly made ; they never doubted but that increasing numbers were still a national blessing, and time has demonstrated, in their instance, as well as in all others, that benevolence is wisdom. Their care was, on the contrary, to vary the means of relieving the poor, and multiply their endeavours in their behalf ; “ I think it plain,” as one of them exclaims, “ that the poor ought neither to be starved, nor hanged, nor SENT AWAY !” What a poor political economist was Sir William Petty !

The following table will exhibit, at one view, some of the facts previously stated. The column of the poor's rate is, in the earlier part of it, given on the authority of the writers previously mentioned, and others referred to ; with the exception of the fifth sum, which, as before stated, is the result of precise and actual

information. The report delivered to Mr. Locke is omitted on account of its gross deficiency ; so is that lately published as the returns of 1748, 1749, and 1750, and for the same reason. The reports of the years 1776 and 1783 are amended on the authority of Mr. Gilbert, who moved for them, and who, on due examination, so corrected them. The succeeding sums are given as published by authority, though the earlier of these are still confessedly deficient. Connected with these sums, I have, in the next column, given the revenue of the corresponding years, or, in the earlier part of the table, where that was not practicable, of nearly the same period. But as revenue may not be thought a fair comparison on many accounts, I have added a column for the exports at the different dates ; and likewise one for the national debt, as it has been pronounced so light in comparison with the nuisance of our poor-rates. Lastly, I have collected the accounts of the numbers of the poor at the different periods, accompanied by a statement of the population at such times, which completes the comparison I wish to institute. Another column or two, however, might well have been added, retorting on the antagonists of the poor-laws their favourite argument. Had the progress of the county and other public disbursements been given (not to mention more distressing national statistics), their “geometric ratio” of increase would have been indeed exhibited ! In refraining to do so, I shall only remark, that to single out poverty whereon to ground these ominous calculations, manifests either an obliquity of intellect or principle truly astonishing.

A. D.	I. Poor's Rate.	II. Revenue.	Proportion.	III. Exports.	Proportion.	IV. Interest of the National Debt.	Proportion.	V. Number of Paupers.	VI. Population.	Proportion.
1601	200,000 (a)	607,395 (m)	10 to 30	2,043,013 (t)	10 to 30			1,380,000 (a)	5,500,000 (n)	10 to 41
1673	810,000 (b)									
1677	700,000 (c)	1,666,037 (n)	10 23							
1677	608,333 (d)									
1680	665,362 (e)									
1698	819,000 (f)	2,001,855 (o)	10 24	4,086,087 (u)	10 61	39,855 (z)	101 to 4			
1700	1,000,000 (g)	3,893,205 (p)	10 39	3,525,907 (v)	10 43	1,310,912	10 13	1,200,000 (b)	5,475,000 (r)	10 45
1740	1,960,000 (h)	6,517,170 (q)		6,045,132 (w)	10 60	1,964,025	10 10		6,064,000 (x)	
1760	1,500,000 (i)	8,809,000 (r)	10 60	15,579,073 (y)	10 102	4,810,821	10 37	700,000 (c)	6,786,000 (k)	10 96
1776	2,000,000 (j)	10,265,405 (s)	10 50	14,755,699	10 73	4,476,821	10 22			
1788	2,500,000 (k)	11,962,718	10 43	14,468,287	10 58	9,669,435	10 38			
1803	4,077,891 (l)	38,101,738	10 91	31,438,405	10 77	18,530,732	10 46	1,039,716 (d)	1300 9,168,000 (L)	10 88
1813	6,676,105	63,827,432	10 95	defective.		26,137,196	10 39	971,250 (E)		
1814	6,294,581	70,240,313	10 111	50,624,229	10 80	28,519,203	10 45	933,343 (F)		
1815	5,418,845	71,153,112	10 132	60,983,063	10 112	30,190,933	10 55	895,336 (G)	11,360,505 (M)	10 120
1816	5,724,506	62,635,711	10 109	51,260,467	10 89	33,589,058	10 58			
1817	6,918,217	52,972,403	10 76	53,123,202	10 77	30,982,012	10 45			
1818	7,890,148	53,959,218	10 68	56,857,927	10 72	31,074,052	10 40			
1819	7,531,650	53,291,508	10 71	46,935,105	10 62	30,517,631	10 40			
1820	7,329,594	55,063,693	10 75	51,733,113	10 70	30,796,103	10 41			
1821	6,958,115	55,520,073	10 79	55,083,522	10 79	31,688,764	10 45			
1822	6,358,703	55,255,620	10 87	56,963,134	10 89	30,645,452	10 48			
1823	5,773,096	54,446,963	10 94	56,234,663	10 98	28,911,935	10 50			
1824	5,736,898	55,456,575	10 97	63,225,272	10 116	28,782,643	10 50			
1825	5,734,216	55,835,626	10 98	60,898,721	10 100					

COL. I.—(a) Colquhoun. —(b) Harl. Mis. viii. 524. —(c) *Ib.* iv. 465. —(d) Yarrenton, England's Improvement, 61. —(e) A. More; from Davenant; Ways and Means, 76. —(f) R. D. Bred for the Poor; F. M. Eden, i. 248. —(g) Ledlie, on Divine Right of Tithes, ii. 573. —(h) England's Path to Wealth and Honour, 8; source Tracts, viii. 423. Pres. Rem. for the Poor. —(i) Decker, on Foreign Trade, 33. —(j) Hanway, Defects of Police, 101, 4to. Other Authors estimate the rate then at from 3,000,000*l.* to 3,500,000*l.* —(k) Gilbert, Parl. Regis. i. 371. —(l) Col. of Paupers on the Poor, 104. —(m) Parl. Rep., *Ib.*, all the succeeding years. —(n) Col. II.—(m) Average of the first 14 years of his reign, from Colquhoun, 157. —(p) Average of Charles the II.'s Revenues, *Ib.* 170. —(q) Revenue in 1701, *Ib.* 175. —(r) Revenue in 1761, *Ib.* 198. —(s) *Ib.* 198. Statistical Illustrations, i. 130, &c., and Public Account annually published. —(t) Col. III.—(t) Eden, Hist. Poor, 408. —(u) *Ib.* 408. —(v) *Ib.* 398. —(w) *Ib.* 408. —(x) Whitworth, 78. —(y) *Ib.* 78. —(z) See Colquhoun's Wealth, Power, &c., ch. vii. and Statist. Illustrations. The sums put down are exclusive of the charge of management, or the produce of the sinking fund. —(A) Davenant, Works, ii. 180. —(B) Bradlow, Aims of a Bill, &c. iii. —(C) Pres. State of Great Britain, 80. —(D) Published Reports. —(E) *Ib.* —(F) *Ib.* —(G) *Ib.* —(H) Gregory King; Davenant, Works, ii. 180. —(I) to (N) Ruggles's History of the Poor; Population Abstracts, &c.

The preceding facts require little comment. They show, in respect of the burden of sustaining the poor, that of all the national items, whether of income or expenditure, this is so far from having increased in a super-proportion, that it is the only one that has greatly lagged behind. Compared with the public revenue, one hundred and fifty years ago, the poor-rate nearly amounted to one-half; whereas at the present period it amounts to little more than one-tenth. As to the interest of the national debt (which is said to be so slight an evil, compared with this),—whereas, at the former period, the expense of the poor was considerably more than twenty times that of the interest of the public incumbrance, at present the latter is more than five times as much as the former. But if these should be rejected as unfair criteria (though I know not why they should be so deemed), let us take the exports of the country during the same period. One hundred and forty years ago, these were only four times as much in amount as the then charge for maintaining the poor; at present the latter is little more than a twelfth of the former. Then, respecting the number of the paupers at each period, compared with the existing population, a decisive proof of the same gratifying fact presents itself. About the revolution, they amounted to one-fourth of the people; at present their relative number is diminished to one-twelfth. As to any great inaccuracy in regard to not including in the latter number the families of the relieved, a matter much dwelt upon by those who wish to represent England as a nation of paupers; we are enabled to correct the general method of multiplying the



number into families, in order to obtain the real proportion. In 1803, the children of the relieved, as well as the children relieved, were added to the number, which swells the total of that year to 1,039,716 ; a very different addition to what such make ; instead of five times the number, not forming near a third of it, including orphans, and the still more unhappy and numerous class, illegitimates. A useful little work, entitled “ Statistical Illustrations,” thus calculating by families, says, that forty-two out of every hundred were, in 1815, receiving parochial relief ! The very sum the poor cost that year utterly disproves this,—less than three farthings a day each, on such a calculation, not as the minimum but as the average of the relief afforded ! Parochial officers, what say ye to this ? But it should be observed, that, of the poor relieved in the workhouse, all the children are numbered ; and frequently, on my own knowledge, those of the out-pensioners likewise ; the illegitimate children constantly. A reference to the work of Sir F. M. Eden will prove this ; and will have the further good effect of showing how few of these pensioners could by any possibility be deducted, consisting, as the great majority does, of the aged poor, and of widows and orphans. But a mistake, of a nature quite contrary to the one under examination, is always made in estimating the real number of paupers amongst us ; and one, as I believe, hitherto entirely overlooked. Not only are those, regularly relieved, returned, but all those who have occasional assistance during the year are entered ; and if they apply more than once, probably they are not unfrequently entered as often as they apply. Whatever may be the general practice as to the latter fact,

certainly very many of the casually relieved poor, who amount, it will be seen on reference to the reports, to nearly half the entire number, if they receive ever so few donations, or not more than one, and do not remain on the books for any considerable length of time ; still, at the end of the year, though long off the list, they are returned. Military courtesy, once a captain and always a captain, is extended even to pauperism. Perhaps I shall be better understood by adducing an example. If we take up an infirmary report, and should judge of the actual inmates by the number of annual admissions, an exceedingly erroneous idea would be entertained. The same mistake applies, though not to an equal extent, in judging of the numbers of the poor from annual reports. The annual amount must necessarily much exceed the co-existing number. Of one thing I feel fully confident ; that the excess above the actual number of the relieved poor, at any one time, thus occasioned, will far more than compensate for the omission of the children of that particular class of paupers who have families. These remarks will not be deemed superfluous by those who wish to redeem the country from the character of pauperism, which some seem so anxious to fix upon it.

But to return to what the adversaries of our national charity mainly dwell upon,—the expense. Again adverting to the preceding table, made up on authorities which are given throughout, I think it may be asserted that the very reverse of what is alleged, in regard to the supposed super-proportionate increase of our poor-rates, is demonstrated. But even with these facts before my eyes, in contradicting the whole

stream of our present speakers and writers on the subject, including some who seem friendly to our national provision, I feel some hesitation; I will therefore turn to an authority whom I am persuaded none will underrate, one whose labours on this important subject future generations will duly appreciate, and one, above all, whom Mr. Malthus eulogizes because of his supposed hostility to the general system, I mean Sir Frederick Morton Eden. After recording the increase of the poor-rates, from early periods to the close of the last century, he presents us with his deliberate judgment on the whole, in these memorable words:—

“Great and burdensome as the poor’s rate may appear, from the returns which were made to parliament in the year 1786, and from the more recent communications which the reader will find detailed in the second volume, *THE RISE OF THE POOR’S RATES HAS NOT KEPT PACE WITH OTHER BRANCHES OF NATIONAL EXPENDITURE, OR EVEN WITH OUR INCREASED ABILITY TO PAY THEM*<sup>1</sup>.”

And if we have occasion to be grateful in reviewing our present condition, in reference to the past, as it respects this necessary burden; we have no less reason to be abundantly satisfied, in comparing the

<sup>1</sup> Sir F. M. Eden, *State of the Poor*, vol. i. p. 407. The same cheering view of the subject is taken by an able writer, in the *Quarterly Review*, vol. xxxiii. p. 454, from whose views, on particular parts of the question, the author reluctantly differs. His words are these: “The whole of the funds now actually expended on the poor (even if we include in this large amount the very large proportion which is now paid to able-bodied labourers, and which to all intents and purposes constitutes a part of the wages of labour) bears a much smaller proportion to the present resources of the country, than the total amount of the contributions raised for the sustenance of the poor bore to the whole of its wealth in the time of Elizabeth.”

weight it imposes on us with that borne by the surrounding nations, when estimating both on any just principle. I shall give this conclusion likewise in the better words of a judicious and candid modern writer upon the subject. "I am persuaded," says he, "that it will be found a certain truth, that the charities of other countries have never, at any period, been so conducted, as to relieve the poor, of an equal population, so adequately as the poor's law, with less encouragement of idleness, or with better stimulus to industry<sup>1</sup>."

(22.) Were we to extend the comparison of our present system of national charity with that of which it is plainly the substitute, the relief afforded by means of religious endowments, we shall find our preference still more fully confirmed. It was one of the main objects of the founders of all such to provide a perpetual system of relief for the poor; and the fulfilment of that intention was guaranteed, in all cases, as far as their original institution went<sup>2</sup>. Hence, from the earliest period of the introduction of Christianity amongst us, and especially since the days of our immortal Alfred, property of that nature kept perpetually accumulating, till we find, at one period, it "absorbed" one-third of the entire kingdom<sup>3</sup>. That this was a pernicious, as well as an expensive system of relieving poverty, we are well aware: it was one, however, nationally recognized and established, those foundations being, as Camden says, for the relief and maintenance of the poor and

<sup>1</sup> Collections relative to systematic Relief, &c. p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, Ecclesiastical History, l. i. chap. xxvii.

<sup>3</sup> Cotton, Abridgment of the Records in the Tower, p. 189.

impotent<sup>1</sup>. That they did so relieve them, I refer to the testimony of Spelman<sup>2</sup>; and that they could not legally refuse so to do, to the authority of Coke<sup>3</sup>. That point of law had been solemnly argued and determined<sup>4</sup>. These, however, Henry VIII. seized, and confiscated; promising, as far as the poor were concerned, to establish a better system upon their ruins, saying to his obsequious parliament, “If I should suffer the *poor and miserable* to be unrelieved, you might well say, that I being put in so special a trust, as I am in this case, were no trusty friend to you, nor charitable to my enne christen.” He fulfilled this trust by seizing all their permanent funds (many of which are in the possession of those who now inveigh against all national charity), and put the poor upon the (illegal) Scotch plan, *i. e.* upon public beggings upon Sundays and holidays<sup>5</sup>. How well it answered, the universal distress—the whippings and cauterizings that ensued—and, above all, the execution of above 70,000 poor wretches, in his reign, principally for thieving, sufficiently attest. Some imagine that, when these were disposed of, poverty ought to have become defunct; and, consequently, that so many years afterwards there could have been no need of a national provision. On some such idea argue, it seems, the framers of the late Emigration Report<sup>6</sup>; such, however, attend but little to the struc-

<sup>1</sup> Camden, Britannia, p. 163; (1637.)

<sup>2</sup> Spelman, De non Temerandis Ecclesiis, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Emigration Report, 3d part, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Spelman, De non Temerandis Ecclesiis, p. 10. Caudris Case, Coke, 5th Report, folio 11; See Coke, 2 Institutes, p. 649, 1642. See Burn, Hist. of Poor Laws, p. 6. Stat. at Large, 2 H. 5, chap. i.

<sup>5</sup> 27 Henry VIII.

<sup>6</sup> Emigration Report, part iii. p. 40.

ture of society. Lord Hale is a better authority: as a philosopher, he knew that, “as the populousness of the kingdom increaseth, the poor will be proportionably increased<sup>1</sup>;” and, as a judge, he saw that unrelieved poverty filled the gaols with malefactors, and fed the gallows and the gibbet<sup>2</sup>. I may digress so far as further to state of this great man, that his endeavours were to amend the poor-laws, which he deemed founded on piety, humanity, and sound policy<sup>3</sup>; not to destroy them: whatever were the defects of the system, even as then administered, still it was his maxim, “better relieve twenty drones, than let one bee perish<sup>4</sup>.” But to return: after sundry abortive attempts to relieve poverty from the unparalleled distress into which this act of spoliation had involved it, the celebrated poor-law of England was passed at the termination of the reign of Elizabeth; it was planned by some of the greatest statesmen the country ever possessed, and was drawn up by one to whom it does greater honour than all his other labours, moral or philosophical, which send him down to posterity without a rival; I mean Bacon. It is touching to hear this great man, in his disgrace and sorrow, thus appealing to his Maker, “O God, the state and bread of the poor have been precious in my eyes!”

(23.) And that the framers of this law were not mistaken as to the effects which they contemplated would result from it, succeeding times have fully testified. We have a better right to assert that the labouring

<sup>1</sup> Lord Hale, On the Poor. Burns, Hist. Poor Laws, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 135, 159, 160.

<sup>4</sup> Quarterly Rev. vol. xix. p. 79.



classes of England have been improved in character, conduct, and condition, by its operation, than its impugners have to assert the contrary: their superiority in those respects is manifest. We are authorised also in attributing no inconsiderable share of the prosperity which has since that period distinguished this nation from all others, to this great and constantly operating cause. But these, though great, are incidental advantages, such, indeed, which ever accompany and reward acts of justice and mercy. Its direct and intended consequences, in regard to the mass of evil it removed, and the good it conferred, are more essential to our present inquiry: happy would it have been for Ireland, if, at that early period, the same great remedy had been applied! These effects, which have continued to the present hour, were instantly obvious, and shall be described in the language of one fully competent to judge, and who lived at precisely the period that enabled him to do so. We read thus in Dalton's Justice, one of our text books: "The benefits of this law" (including another for the suppressing of vagabonds, which, in effect, was a part of the system) "are, 1. Idleness is very much repressed. 2. *Infinite swarms* of idle vagabonds are rooted out, which *before* wandered up and down, to the great danger and indignity of our nation. 3. We ourselves are now compelled but to relieve the poore of our own parishes (whose condition and estate we know), and to a certainty of gift, wherewith we are now taxed by our neighbours; whereas *before*, we gave we knew not what, nor to whom; and many times to such as were ready to

have cut our throats, if opportunity had served them<sup>1</sup>." Such is the testimony of an eye-witness as to the immediate effect of the establishment of the poor-laws, and that witness Dalton. And on what principle of sophistry can its import be evaded, seeing that it strictly comports with the reason of the case, and is fully confirmed by the present condition of every surrounding country, which is still without a national provision for the poor ?

(24.) But the abrogation of the constitutional right of poverty, now established and enjoyed for so many generations, would not only remit us to the state from which the country was then happily liberated, but would repeat the wanton cruelty of the last Henry, and under circumstances which would greatly aggravate it. One thing is lost sight of entirely in discussing this subject, namely, that the establishment by law of a perpetual and sufficient fund of relief amongst us, for the maintenance of the poor, has effectually prevented the creation of one by the munificence of private individuals, which would, ere this, have more than repaired the wrongs thus perpetrated, and, indeed, would again have carried provision to a pernicious excess. Certain is it, that, during the long intervening time, had there been no regular relief for the distressed poor, few with the feelings of men or of Christians, whose lives had been prosperous and happy, could have lived or died without making some returns, in the form of charity, as a thank-offering to the Deity. Even with the knowledge that such provision has been made, and that so

<sup>1</sup> Dalton, Country Justice, ch. xlvii. ; published 1618.

to leave or give property at present is little more than bequeathing it to the parish, still this natural feeling has often got the better of reason itself; and very much property has actually been thus left, and infinitely more would have been, had not the law interfered, rendering all bequests void, if left within a year and a day of the testator's death, consequently, in many cases, rendering such bequests nugatory, as last wills are often made within that period of dissolution.

(25.) Had it not been for this regular provision and this obstacle to re-creating one, an ample fund would have been speedily realized for the relief of the poor ; in proof of this important assumption, I appeal to the conduct of the rich of a neighbouring nation, not, I hope, more distinguished for their charity than Englishmen. As the men of the revolution so “ properly and judiciously” rejected the plague of England, a national provision, what is the conduct of that people ? Notwithstanding the impediments the law imposes there, as well as here, in the way of charitable bequests ; and independently of the donations, not exceeding one hundred crowns, which it does not recognise ; and without including those secret donations which elude the law, and the many legacies which have not been valued, which altogether amount to very large sums ; in the five years terminating with 1823, with which year the report I have before me concludes,—there were appropriated to the use of the poor in that country,

In money	10,242,568
In "rentes"	188,157
In real property	2,478,041
	<u>12,908,766 fr.</u>

This sum, independently of the omissions previously alluded to, and the immense ecclesiastical donations during the same period, but imperfectly shows what Englishmen would have done for generations past, had there been no regular provision for their poor and destitute countrymen. To deprive the poor, therefore, of their long-acknowledged rights, founded upon justice, mercy, and the law of the land, would not be merely a positive spoliation, of the darkest character, but a negative robbery, to at least an equal extent. All the real property of the country has been transmitted and received on this condition ; the violation of which would be (to show the offence in an individual case, and not by rhetorical illustration) as though an elder son, to whom a confiding father had committed an imbecile and impotent brother, should, after having intercepted the bounty of every other branch of the family, under colour of providing for him himself, at length throw his parent's will into the fire, to free himself from the incumbrance, and then turn the sufferer adrift as a nuisance in his house and a disgrace to the family.

(26.) In the preceding remarks on the poor-laws of England, tedious as I fear they may be deemed, I have omitted many facts and arguments which have a strong bearing upon the subject ; I am in no fear as to their abrogation in this country, but I have been thus diffuse in order to answer by a prolepsis some of the objections which may be advanced against their extension to Ireland. Here, whatever may be individually felt or asserted to the contrary, they constitute nationally

speaking, to all intents and purposes, a voluntary charity; and as such will, I am persuaded, never cease to be cherished by us. England may be burdened by them, but it is a burden of which she is justly proud, and which has given stability to her footsteps in her march to national prosperity: however that may be, she would just as soon rid herself of the incumbrance of destitute infancy and decrepit age, as Æneas would have deserted to their fate the helpless beings with which he came loaded, and impeded in his retreat from the burning ruins of Troy. On the other hand, “as the care of the poor ought to be the principal object of all laws<sup>1</sup>,” so it will become, ere long, the favourite work of the legislature to render our present system more efficient, to its great end, than it is at present; and to adapt it more completely to the altered circumstances of the times. Petty recommended, even in a period of very general distress, that the charge of sustaining the poor should be “augmented<sup>2</sup>,” but, I am persuaded, the true course of ameliorating their condition would, in regard of mere expenditure, have a directly contrary effect. The best way of assisting the poor, at least that part of them capable of exertion, is the enabling them to assist themselves; and, in order that we may know how to do this, we ought to place ourselves in the situation in which they are; feel their peculiar wants and wishes, and observe the difficulties by which they are surrounded. Much, very much, I am persuaded, might be done in their behalf, which would indeed, in the first instance, con-

<sup>1</sup> Paley, *Moral Phil.*, book iii. ch. 4, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Petty, *Of Taxes and Contributions*, p. 13.

duce to their welfare, and that, doubtless, ought to be the great object ; but which would as inevitably rebound to that of the public ; and by means which, while drawing a broad line of distinction between the deserving and profligate poor, not for the purpose of actually starving these, but of more effectually assisting and distinguishing those, would change the whole face of pauperism, and convert the great charity of the country into a mighty and unfailing instrument of its moral elevation. I now allude to means which would occasion no expense to any single individual, or to the community at large ; means not of a whimsical, but of a strictly practicable nature,—not founded on some new discovery, but which have been long pointed out by the most patriotic men the country has ever produced ; and, in fine, which, having been tried in many instances without failure in any, only await the sanction of the legislature to render them general ; while their practicability has been already fully demonstrated in another cause and country. To these topics I shall not allude at present, however tempted to discuss them, though the subject has been one of long and pleasing consideration. They are put into a form to be submitted to the public on some future occasion ; and nothing but the consciousness that I have already trespassed too far upon the patience of the reader prevents me going into them at present. I shall, therefore, content myself with saying, that the poor-law which I propose for Ireland, is on the same principle as that which has been so long and so beneficially established amongst us, and rests upon the foundation of compulsory pro-



vision and discretionary relief; but relief, in all practicable cases, connected with labour of a kind not to interfere with the regular demand existing for it. In a word, assisting poverty to emerge from its condition, rather than making it dependent upon it; and affording at once the inducements for such an effort, and the means of rendering it successful. But into these particulars, I repeat, I must not now allow myself to proceed.

(27.) The principal proposition, then, which I make in favour of Ireland, is the immediate establishment of a national provision for the poor, and the outcry which is raised against this by political economists, is a sufficient apology for the length into which I have gone in defence of the measure, and in showing its results. And if any of the arguments advanced in favour of the principle generally, have the least weight, or have made any impression; when applied to Ireland in particular, they acquire tenfold force. Are the wrongs perpetrated by absenteeism in clearing farms, dispossessing tenants, in disturbing and impoverishing the country, undeniably great? A poor's law is the specific for those evils; it would interpose a barrier to those clearances—calm those disturbances; in a word, it would operate as an effectual check to the cupidity and cruelty of a system which has long proved itself insensible to all but mercenary motives. Is the want of employment another of the peculiar grievances of that country? A poor's law, under proper regulation, would go far to remedy that evil<sup>1</sup>. Is the remuneration

<sup>1</sup> Dalton, Country Justice, ch. xx.

of labour there inadequate to a decent, comfortable state of living? A poor's law would undoubtedly raise and sustain the value of labour. On this last point, indeed, directly the contrary has been asserted, in a spirit of hostility to the poor-laws, and in defiance of both reason and experience<sup>1</sup>. But Lord Hale has proved what is here maintained, in his treatise on the subject, the arguments of which cruelty and sophistry will never be able to answer, and which justice and mercy will never attempt to do. Nay, so clear is this point, that Lord Kaimes, in writing against the system, confesses that its tendency is to increase the remuneration of labour; one of the most essential and universal benefits which could be bestowed upon Ireland.

It may be necessary to particularize an objection or two urged against this measure, as peculiar to Ireland. The grand one, I presume, is, that it would attempt an impossibility; to which I will simply reply, by observing, that the fallacy of this objection has been practically demonstrated in this and many other countries, by the experience of centuries; and that it is theoretically false, I trust I shall fully prove by actual calculations, touching the principle of human increase, in a work to which I have often ventured to allude. The strange idea of Mr. Malthus, that we should have had four million millions of labourers<sup>2</sup>, if our funds for the poor had been properly managed, will there, I trust, be fully confuted. That the poor-laws have a tendency to increase population<sup>3</sup>, I deny; without, however, admitting that such an increase would be an evil,

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, Essay, p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 413.

which I equally controvert. It is singular enough that one of the leading impugners of those laws, Lord Kaimes (who, nevertheless, suggested in their stead a far more burdensome and impracticable system), should have urged a directly contrary objection to them, arguing that they have a positive tendency to “depopulate the country.” Without entering into either argument, it may suffice to say, that, as far as experience goes, he was right: nothing can be more at war with fact than to assert the contrary. Ireland, without poor-laws, notwithstanding her constant emigrations to England and elsewhere, has increased in inhabitants more rapidly than England, which enjoys such laws; and Scotland, which, in proportion to its population, certainly sends forth a far greater number, had, during the ten years between 1811 and 1821, increased fourteen and a half per centum; while England and Wales, which have received these immense accessions from both countries, forming so considerable a portion of the inhabitants of all the crowded districts, had increased only sixteen and one-third, or one and four-fifths more, in ten years. But to return to Ireland, with which we have at present to do; the population of that island has augmented more rapidly than England, notwithstanding all these numerous and incessant deportations, and in consequence of a principle already developed. This argument, then, totally fails.

(28.) But the next objection to the poor-laws in Ireland, is the most powerful one, as rooted in self-interest. Mr. Malthus informs the Emigration Committee, by whom he is appealed to on the question, that “the rates would very soon absorb the rentals of

all the estates<sup>1</sup>,” thus rousing in hostility to the measure the ready fears and interested feelings of those to whom the assertion is addressed. Prophecies are usually little attended to, excepting when directed against poverty and the poor-laws: then they are deemed inspiration itself; even though they proceed from oracles whose claims to prescience have as yet been but very poorly vindicated. To say nothing of many strange notions which have, I understand, been quietly withdrawn, it was foretold, on the same authority, a quarter of a century ago, that the price of labour had been “continually rising—not to fall again; that the rents of land had been every where advancing—not to fall again; that the price of produce would rise—not to fall again;” that the return of such scarcities as had been recently experienced (those of 1800 and 1801) were to be expected as “unavoidable:” with some strange speculations about the future value of “patents for food,” and other matters, concluding with this ominous apostrophe, in allusion to such complaints—“how will they be aggravated twenty years hence<sup>2</sup>!” That interval has elapsed, and has answered the question: at its termination, we know that the distresses of the country arose from diametrically opposite causes; from depreciation of prices, and, as Lord Liverpool stated, from over-production of provisions. In that interval, indeed, many fluctuations have occurred, none of which have been caused by the principle of population: at one time the demand for labour has been distressingly excessive; at another as much

<sup>1</sup> Emigration Report, part iii. p. 31, § 3227.

<sup>2</sup> Malthus, Essay, pp. 444, 445.

too low; on the whole, however, it is acknowledged, by the authority mentioned, to have been great. But during all this time, the bounties of Providence have flowed upon us in an equal and unfailing stream, which has still enlarged with our enlarging numbers. Still, however, the contrary principle has been maintained. Like the maledictory prophet of old, it may have varied its positions, but it has persevered in its purpose. Secure and at a distance, it has fixed its malignant gaze upon the tribes of human beings spreading beneath, and “covering the face of the earth,” and has resumed from time to time its prophecies against the increasing multitudes. “But GOD hath blessed them, and they shall be blessed!”

But, to return to the objection to a poor’s law, on the score of its absorbing the entire rental of Ireland: limit, if you please, to a maximum the amount of relief that one parish shall raise; and empower such parish, in case of unrelieved distress still prevailing, to apply for assistance to that parish of the barony or county which is the least burdened, agreeably to the letter of our original law, and this objection also is obviated.

As to the term “absorbing” rents, now so hack-nied, what, I would ask, is it that Ireland wants, but that some part of its rental should be absorbed? It is the very relief that is suitable to, and demanded for, her particular case. Of all the money circulated in a country, that dispensed by the poor is the most beneficial, because it passes immediately into the hands of active reproductive industry, and is distributed by the most rapid of all the channels of circula-

tion throughout the whole country. Absorb part of the rental! Why so it would, and as beneficially as a famishing man would absorb a meal of food. A poor's law, indeed, would, in this respect, be doubly beneficial; it would be a support to the industrious, as well as a relief to the distressed part of the community. This sacred charity would descend upon that bruised and afflicted country like an angel of mercy, with healing in its wings; it would "come down like rain on the mown grass;" as showers that water the earth, gasping under the meridian sun, clothing it again with all the bloom and verdure of which it had been divested. Ireland would then, indeed, "absorb" what would restore her to health and peace; and the youngest sister of the Union would become one of the fairest and most beloved of all the branches of the British family.

(29.) Other arguments and objections, exclusively referrible to Ireland, I had meant to have noticed; but I shall waive them in favour of an extract or two from a little work in my possession, on this very subject, written by a dignitary of the church of Ireland, Dr. Woodward, late bishop of Cloyne. It perhaps had been better for the cause, if, instead of the preceding remarks, the whole of the pamphlet had been reprinted. It was published about sixty years ago; and I must again beg the reader to attend to the date, for the purpose of once more showing him the absurdity of attributing the distresses of Ireland to her present overflowing population. There was then but little beyond a third of the present inhabitants, as will be seen by a reference to the table, and yet the condition



of that scanty number will sufficiently appear. It must be remarked, that the object of the publication was the recommendation of a poor-law for Ireland, as the title sufficiently explains, “An Argument in support of the RIGHT of the POOR in the Kingdom of Ireland to a National Provision<sup>1</sup>.” And let it not be supposed that the proposition had not then to contend with the same opposition that it meets with at present: “the enormous expense<sup>2</sup>,” the exorbitance of the poor-rates<sup>3</sup>, &c., were then made precisely the same objection as that which, under the fashionable term “absorption,” now universally obtains, and which, by the bye, furthermore corroborates the previous argument, that the poor’s rate of England will not be found, on due examination, to have imposed an increasing burden upon us.

I shall first quote Dr. Woodward’s opening sentence. “That the lower class of our people are very ill accommodated with lodging, raiment, and even food, is but too manifest to all who are acquainted with their manner of living. That their poverty is like to continue with but little mitigation, will be evident to any intelligent man, who reflects on the following, amongst other, causes of it: the *exorbitant rent* extorted from the poorer tenants, ever loth and afraid to leave the ancient habitations, by the general method of letting farms to the highest bidder, without any allowance to a tenant right: the system

<sup>1</sup> By Richard Woodward, LL.D., (Dean of Clogher, afterwards Bishop of Cloyne); Dublin, third edition, 1785: written 1768.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Woodward, *Argument*, &c. p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

of letting large tracts of lands to *under-takers*, inured to *tyranny and extortion*, as prejudicial to the landlord as to the under-tenant: the oppression of duty-work, which calls the cottager arbitrarily from the tillage of the little spot which he holds at so dear a rent; and the low rate of wages for labour. These circumstances, combined with some others, reduce the Irish cottager below the peasant of almost every country of Europe. Such is his hard condition, in the most plentiful season, and in the prime of his health and strength: what then must be his state in time of dearth, under the pressure of years, infirmities, or even a very numerous family? His expenses admit of no retrenchment. He is a stranger to luxury, or even to decent accommodation, and yet his wages seldom afford any reserve. On the death of such a father of a family, dependent on his labours for their main, or perhaps entire support, how forlorn must be the situation of his widow or orphan children! It would shock a tender mind to imagine (if imagination could paint) the miseries to which the bulk of the inhabitants of this kingdom are constantly exposed by the slightest reverse of fortune; by a single bad season; by an accidental loss; by an occasional disease, or worn by the gradual decay of nature. Nor are these affecting scenes confined to seasons of scarcity; they must always exist in a great, though not equal, number. They present themselves but too often to every country gentleman, and still more to the clergy, in the exercise of their parochial duties (to whose experience we appeal), to need a

proof. They cannot be doubted or denied by any, but those who shut their eyes, or steel their hearts against them.

“So numerous, so urgent, and so well known are the distresses of the poor: let us now fairly estimate the sufficiency of the resources at present subsisting for their relief. Our eyes will be naturally turned, first, to the land-gentlemen, who derive their wealth and importance from the labour of these men. Of these, many, perhaps a majority, of the most considerable *constantly reside in another kingdom*; and though some of them may cast back a part of their superfluity on those to whose industry they owe their ALL, yet it is to be feared that such instances are comparatively very rare. On the contrary, it is too frequently urged, as a recommendation of Irish property, that it is not encumbered with any tax for the maintenance of the poor. A singular instance this of the inadvertence (one would hope only of the inadvertence, lest we should be forced to impute it to the depravity) of mankind, that such a phrase could be rendered so familiar to the ear of any wise or good man, as to lose its genuine horror! If the sentiment were developed, surely few would entertain it, and still fewer avow it: no ingenuous reader will, therefore, think it invidious or unnecessary, in this interesting argument, to lay open its plain import, which is this: ‘an estate in this kingdom is represented to be peculiarly advantageous to the landlord, because, though he may, and generally does, avail himself of the utmost profit that can be drawn from the labour of his tenant (leaving him too scanty a *present* main-

tenance), he is nevertheless at liberty to abandon that labourer to perish, when he is unable to work any longer.' Is this boasted privilege either honourable or desirable? A wise man would not glory in such an exemption, a good man would not claim it, and he who wishes to enjoy does not deserve it <sup>1</sup>."

In combating the idea that the voluntary charity of the rich may sufficiently supply the exigencies of the poor, he says, "It cannot be denied, but that by far the greater part of our lands do not enjoy the benefit of the proprietor's residence, and in general the poor of these estates partake not of his charity. Now, when we have weighed, on one side, the extraordinary indigence of the whole peasantry, and allowed, on the other, for the number of absentees from the kingdom, the remoteness of many estates from the mansions of the resident gentry, (which, together, render it no uncommon case to find a tract of country containing some scores of square miles without one family of note,) it will be intuitively clear that there can be no balance, nor, indeed, any the least proportion, between the necessities of the poor tenants and the alms of their landlords<sup>2</sup>."

As to the present inadequate, but meritorious method of relieving the distresses of poverty, these remarks occur, which may serve to confirm Arthur Young's representations of Irish charity, and rectify some recent misstatements on that subject: "Can there be a spectacle more edifying, and at the same time more reproachful to an affluent landlord, than

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Woodward, *Argument, &c.* pp. 17, 18, 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 19, 20.

to see (and it is his own neglect if he does not see or know it) one of his poor tenants feeding another with bread taken, as it were, from the mouths of his own children : whilst he who is feasting on the labours of both, attends to the miseries of neither, but throws the whole burden of relieving them on those, whom no reasonable bystander could think equal to bear the smallest part of it<sup>1</sup>."

Speaking of the inherent right of the poor to reasonable sustentation, he concludes his unanswerable arguments thus : "It would be a waste of words, and a disgrace to reasoning, to labour to prove a point so clear as this ; that the richer members of society, who are a minority, have no right to exclude the lower class, who are a majority, from any portion of the public patrimony, without securing to them the resource of a subsistence ; when they must otherwise be reduced to the dreadful alternative of breaking through those regulations, or perishing by a dutiful observance of them<sup>2</sup>."

This admirable writer proceeds to particularize the descriptions of persons who ought more especially to be the objects of the national charity ; which he says are, 1. The infant poor<sup>3</sup> ; 2. The sick poor<sup>4</sup> ; and, 3. The aged poor<sup>5</sup>. Alluding to the latter, he makes this striking remark ; "If at the close of life they become a burden ; and, having only to plead their former services, have not that plea allowed, from reasons of policy ;" he says, "it would be a still higher degree of economy, and even mercy, to adopt the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Woodward, Argument, &c. p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

refined Indian policy of putting an immediate end to them<sup>1</sup>."

Nor can I dismiss this interesting writer without inserting his answer to those who urge that the legal relief of poverty encourages idleness and dissipation. After having proved directly the contrary, by the experience of mankind in every country where such provision has been established, he adds, "But to take this argument in its strongest bearing, and confine ourselves to the case of an idle, profligate man, who in the extremity of age or sickness cries out for food or medicine; can any one avow, that we should suppress every tender feeling, stop our hand when, by the instinct of compassion, it is stretching forth relief to him, and, with a stoical indifference, suffer him to perish, from a deep and doubtful speculation whether such relief may not encourage idleness, and become, in the end, a political evil? And if we may, without injury to the state, (and must, if we expect mercy ourselves,) relieve the distress, though we blame the cause; wherein consists the inexpediency of obliging those of the rich, who are too distant or dissipated to know, or too callous to regard, the misery of the poor, to contribute to its relief, and not throw the whole burden (as at present) on the resident, the considerate, and the benevolent?—for a legal provision hath this double advantage above voluntary alms, that it is at once most equitable to those who pay, and most equal and effectual to those who receive<sup>2</sup>.

"Now if no reasoning can justify such obduracy,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Woodward, *Argument, &c.* p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39.



as would permit a wretch to languish without help in age, or sickness, because he had not made a provident use of his health and strength ; on what principle shall we conclude, from the imprudence of the parent, against all compassion to his orphan children ? on what pretext shall we exclude from the public care the distresses of the laborious and frugal, which were owing neither to their own, nor their parents' political sins ; but took their rise from high rents and low wages, from the scarcity of bread, or the check of a manufacture ; from the sudden increase of family, or the death of cattle ; from disease unassisted by medicine ; and in consequence, perhaps, of that want of help, the untimely loss of an industrious father<sup>1</sup> ?”

The foregoing are a few extracts from this short, but striking pamphlet ; the divinity, humanity, and policy of the principle advocated, are unanswerable. To the honour of its author, he was one of the first, if not the very first to propose the extension of the system of poor-laws to Ireland : his proposition may be awhile longer resisted ; but backed, as it is, by the duties and feelings of humanity, it will assuredly prevail.

(30.) But, in treating of the affairs of Ireland, it is totally impossible to lose sight of the intimate connexion which exists between the two countries ; and as, in the evil of absenteeism, we have shown its bearings on the agricultural interests of England ; so, in reference to a provision for the poor, the latter division of the empire has a deep interest at stake, and one which, before long, she will assuredly assert,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Woodward, *Argument*, pp. 39, 40.

equally for the protection of her own poor, and those of Ireland. It will require few words to explain what I mean, or prove what I am about to assert : THE WANT OF A PROVISION FOR THE POOR OF IRELAND (AND I WILL INCLUDE THOSE OF SCOTLAND ALSO) IS A GRIEVOUS INJURY TO THE WORKING CLASSES OF ENGLAND. They are injured by the market of labour being overstocked, and greatly depressed by the multitudes who are annually making this country their asylum : in the harvest-field, in the factory, or, in short, in every sphere of industry, the English labourer and workman finds himself interfered with, and his remuneration reduced, if not himself thrown actually out of employment, by this constant and vast emigration. The poor creatures who take refuge in this country, whom Dr. Chalmers calls “ hosts of locusts,” I do not blame, (absenteeism has deprived them of labour and of bread, and they are pursuing it to obtain, if possible, a little of both) ; on the contrary, I would receive them, and, were I to determine, extend to them, at all hazards, the benefit of our own benevolent institutions : but, in the mean time, I cannot but reprobate, in the strongest possible terms, the conduct of those who are driving and “ clearing” them from their estates and the country, and, by so doing, are expelling multitudes of them to this ; while they are perpetrating an irreparable wrong on the unhappy creatures they are the cause of expatriating, they are inflicting a serious and an increasing injury on the poorer classes of this country ; and all, forsooth, that the Irish landlord, often an absentee, who now does not contribute a farthing to their relief, may

have larger farms, and, as he thinks, a greater “surplus produce.” This is not to be borne. The interests of our own poor imperiously demand that those of Ireland should be legally supported.

(31.) But in proposing poor-laws for Ireland, I would not lose sight of that evil which has rendered them the more necessary, and which, when established, would still prevent them from working all the good they are naturally calculated to produce; I mean absenteeism. To discourage and suppress this, as far as possible, without having recourse to harsher or more direct means, I would propose that the property of all absentees (properly such) should contribute in at least a two-fold proportion to this national charity<sup>1</sup>; the additional rate to be levied on such by a bill drawn by the overseer directly on the party. This would, in some slight degree, compel them to succour that poverty which they have occasioned, and which the experience of centuries shows they never will voluntarily relieve; and it would, moreover, in its operation, give some portion of employment to those whom their unnatural desertion has thrown out of bread,

(32.) Furthermore: another genuine offspring of absenteeism is the system of subletting; creating a class, who, generally speaking, must be more than men, circumstanced as they are, to be less than exactors and oppressors. Utterly impossible is it for the distant landlord, on any such system, to discharge a single duty he owes to his dependents; and it amounts to a miracle, in all instances, whatever may be his

<sup>1</sup> It has been proposed, and by great authorities, that absentees should bear the entire expense.

natural disposition, if such are not harassed and ground down to the utmost possible degree of human endurance. The dark picture of cruelty and wrongs which this practice inevitably occasions, cannot be overcharged; it is equally an enemy to the landlord, the tenant, and the country; and what sort of a national offence must absenteeism be, to demand such an ally? Wherever the absentee may move, however he may bask in the beams of pleasure and prosperity, he still casts this dark and distant shadow, in which unseen cruelties and wrongs are perpetrated with impunity, and in obscurity; a shadow which wraps a whole country in wretchedness and despair. To this cruel and tyrannous system we have seen how much of that turbulence and insubordination, which so frequently agitate Ireland, and which are invariably terminated so tragically, is justly attributed. I should, on every account, be induced to take decisive steps against this fatal pest. Bearing in mind the poverty which it invariably creates, and those from whom it exacts its gains, I would act accordingly: I would levy an additional rate on every several letting (at least out of the same family) to which the owner should voluntarily subject his property, and payable by himself. This would make some, though I confess an inadequate distinction, between those who are, and ever have been, the curse of Ireland, and such who are pursuing a course which scatters blessings around them. These propositions would have, of course, a prospective operation only; and to render them fair and efficient, in case of any future lessees becoming, against the consent of the proprietor, middlemen

(further than letting their labouring cottagers land, regulated in rent by the price themselves pay, a practice which ought constantly to be encouraged), their leases to be forfeited. I purposely avoid entering on the consideration of the subletting act, in thus alluding to the mercenary interests, almost peculiar to Ireland, interposed between the landlord and the cultivator, equally to the prejudice of both, and so injurious to the country.

(33.) In proposing these lenient measures in relation to absenteeism, it perhaps may be objected, that England derives the benefit which Ireland loses, on account of this fatal practice; and this, to a certain extent, is undoubtedly true; which circumstance, combined with the fact that the wealth, not only of the kingdom, has a tendency to concentrate in England, but that much of that of our immense foreign possessions does ultimately do so, ought to teach us the injustice of upbraiding the peasantry of Ireland, compared with those of England, with their poverty. But, as it regards England itself, it is a lamentable fact, that the same evil, absenteeism, is, on a general balance, annually abstracting many millions of our wealth, and is the undoubted source of much poverty and suffering. The absentees are, in every point of view, as Adam Smith has intimated, fair subjects of taxation; I do not mean that sort of taxation which should fall equally on all British subjects, and would consequently punish the meritorious in order to reach them; but one which they should be made exclusively to bear. Granting that they have a right to desert their country, if they choose, still they have not a right, while

so doing, to avail themselves of the advantages of its high values, without sustaining any part of the heavy burdens which the system imposes : weighing their interest in this selfish and dishonest balance, just in proportion as they shift their share of the public burdens and private duties from themselves, they impose upon others the additional weight. The property of these ought instantly to be taxed, and a part of the proceeds applied to giving employment to Ireland, as some compensation for that loss of it which the Union could not but occasion, on account of the necessary absenteeism of part of the legislature, for a considerable period of every year. In closing these remarks upon absenteeism, it may be proper to state, that no rigid or illiberal construction of the term is intended; nothing that would impede those occasional visits to other countries, which either pleasure or improvement may dictate, and which do not involve that continued absence (from far different motives), and consequent loss to the country, which such a desertion, on the part of some of its wealthiest families, necessarily occasions.

(34.) A system like the English poor-laws, reformed, and adapted to the present times, and fitted to the peculiar circumstances of the country; and, above all, connected with labour, in all cases where the benefited are capable of rendering it, when thus carried into execution, would have the effect of fining absenteeism, and especially underletting; of keeping at home some part of that immense sum of which Ireland is annually robbed; and of calling forth and directing a mighty mass of that labour, which, if it be



not itself capital, is the means by which capital is created. Ireland, beyond all countries I have ever witnessed, presents the most inviting field for exertions of this general kind, exertions which could only be publicly undertaken, and which it would be worthy of the nation to accomplish. On all her shores, in many of her rivers, and in almost every district, the most beneficial works might be accomplished; these present themselves in almost every form, and at every step. I will mention, at present, only one of them. How many hundreds of thousands of tons of hemp and flax might be annually raised, by draining and cultivating a small part only of the immense bogs with which the face of Ireland is deformed!—land peculiarly favourable to such produce, and capable of raising any other, when so prepared and drained<sup>1</sup>. Arrangements of the most satisfactory nature might be entered into with the proprietors, either for the purchase or the lease of such; and a little exertion of this kind would instantly render us independent of the Baltic, in regard to some of the most important of our naval or domestic supplies. I would even incur the odium of a recurrence to the exploded, and, as it is termed, barbarous system of our forefathers, by affording direct encouragement to such endeavours, even when privately undertaken, rather than that they should not be attempted. I would bestow part of the taxes obtained on those foreign products which might be so well raised there, giving employment, and adding to the permanent wealth of the country, in direct bounties upon such culture.

<sup>1</sup> Harte, *Essays on Husbandry*, p. 59.

Bounties ! methinks I hear the political economists exclaim. Aye, bounties. Do not these, I would ask, resort to them, at least sanction by their dogmas those who do ? What is the whole scheme of expatriation, now silently pursued, and proposed upon so much larger a scale, by which the empire incurs so great an expense, to ship off numbers of its industrious hands, but bounties of another kind,—bounties for the discouragement of internal labour ? But bounties for its direct encouragement are not, forsooth, deemed scientific. With more still to be done in that country than can be performed in centuries ; with hands unemployed which might commence those magnificent tasks that await future generations ; what a strange evidence of ignorance or cruelty it is thus to slight the only instruments capable of effectuating them,—human beings ! to regard them as of no value, nay, as of less than none ; to incur a heavy item of public expense in shipping them off to certain distress, and often to speedy destruction ! There lies before me, in the newspapers of the day, an account of the wretched fate of many of those recently sent off to our North American provinces ; sickness and want are sweeping them off by wholesale, and so far, indeed, the expedient is finally successful in the eyes of those who believe that human beings are become “superfluous.” Such feelings, however, I am certain do not influence those who have unfortunately acted upon such mistaken views ; I trust these accounts are exaggerations : but there must be a broad and deep foundation of misery on which they rest ; and, unfortunately, they receive a melancholy confirmation from what we have

previously heard, and have fully known to be the case in these deportations thither, or to the southern part of the opposite continent. With the knowledge of these things, however, calculations are entered into as to the hundreds of thousands of tons of British shipping, and the hundreds of thousands of British subjects that they might transport; and, to render the scheme rather more palatable at home, a table, I see, is given, where the personal expenses of each are estimated, and a loan proposed for the general purposes of the plan, repayable by the transports after a certain term. Compared with stock so created, the South American bubbles are solidity itself.

(35.) But I repeat, again and again, and, were it in my power, I would speak it with a voice of thunder in the ear of those who, in conformity with the modern dogmas, are mainly instrumental in these deportations, that our fellow-subjects, at all events, cannot be superfluous till our lands are cultivated; and that the best colonies we can plant, whether in reference to encouraging agriculture or manufactures, are those which might be planted on the deserts of our European empire. It may be answered, that, to enclose and cultivate these on a large plan, would not be profitable as a speculation. It is admitted. Providence is too wise and too kind to offer any such inducements to the monopolists. But afford facilities to lesser cultivators, by whose efforts all classes would be benefited, and they will effectuate, on a small scale, what has rarely been performed on a large one. This plan is in the order of nature; is that by which every great object is accomplished; and is best conducive to the real interests

of society. We have seen the wonders which industry has effected in the Netherlands, and we are assured, that they have all been wrought by those divided and individual exertions, without which none of them would have been successful<sup>1</sup>.

(36.) The following table will speak to the heart, it is hoped, as well as to the eye, and exhibit, not a field of labour merely to the unemployed population of Ireland, but a mine of wealth to the empire, compared with which the gems of India, or the metals of America sink into utter worthlessness : to which may be added the circling “wastes of the sea,” an expression I shall still continue to repeat ; the due improvement of which would enlarge the limits of industry, and the means of subsistence, to an extent literally incalculable. And yet we fancy ourselves as in a state of siege, and are actually conveying our forces out of the citadel of the empire, in apprehension of a scarcity of provisions !

General Statement of the Cultivated, Uncultivated, and Unprofitable Land of the United Kingdom, from 3d Rep. on Emigration, p. 361.\*

	Cultivated.	Uncultivated Wastes capa- ble of Im- provement.	Unprofitable.	Total.
	ACRES.	ACRES.	ACRES.	ACRES.
England . .	25,632,000	3,454,000	3,256,400	32,342,400
Wales . . .	3,117,000	530,000	1,105,000	4,752,000
Scotland . .	5,265,000	5,950,000	8,523,930	19,738,930
Ireland . . .	12,125,280	4,900,000	2,416,664	19,441,944
British Islands.	383,690	166,000	569,469	1,119,159
	46,522,970	15,000,000	15,871,463	77,394,433

\* The second column in this table is what claims our primary attention, and fully shows where ten times the number of our idle and starving poor might be profitably employed. Even the third, which gives the extent of the unprofitable land of the kingdom, might be safely resorted to if it should ever become necessary to do so. No land, under a certain elevation, is unprofitable. (Lin-næus, p. 29, Inaug. Harte's Essays, p. 88. Remarks on Landed and Commercial Policy, p. 194, &c.) By far the most productive soils of England, and even the Netherlands, were formerly deemed “unprofitable.”

<sup>1</sup> See Abbé Main, Communications to Board of Agric. vol. i.

§ XIV. (1.) Such are some of the propositions which I have to make in behalf of Ireland; others, highly important in themselves, but of a less momentous and general character, I shall waive at present, in favour of one, which, while on this subject, can neither be overlooked nor hastily dismissed; involving, as it does, without a figure of speech, the remaining vital interest of a country thus deserted and degraded; that interest which gives the limited measure of employment and food which is still afforded to the mass of the community, and in the due support of which the best hopes of their future improvement are founded. But this proposition is, strictly speaking, of a negative character, and goes to the continuation of an advantage, which has now been for many years enjoyed, rather than the bestowment of any new or additional benefit<sup>1</sup>: it implores, that if no new policy shall be pursued to serve and assist Ireland, none shall be adopted that shall injure her interests or complete her ruin. It is almost needless to explain, that I refer to a continuation of a free and exclusive access to the markets of Great Britain for her agricultural products; or, in other words, that the legislature shall still continue to protect her almost only branch of national

<sup>1</sup> Ireland has long had access to the British market for many of the products of her soil, to which privilege was added, early in this century, an unrestrained trade for her corn: to extend this to foreigners would destroy its value. In much of the last century, the direct encouragement of English tillage, by bounties, operated as a bonus upon Irish pasturage; and, now that an increased population there, in spite of the dogmas of our antipopulationists, has greatly augmented her disposable produce, I contend that she is, at this moment, in the enjoyment of a less effectual protection than she was during many periods of the last century.

industry by efficient corn-laws. If we, in England, want additional supplies, let us seek them in the half-cultivated fields of Ireland; where, were additional labour, now worse than wasted in wandering and beggary, applied and well directed (I appeal to every practical agriculturist who has witnessed them), the product would be at once doubled; or in those fertile wastes of so vast an extent, which have, as yet, never been cultivated at all. Let us obtain them, I say, thence, rather than from the plains of Poland or of Prussia: let us employ and feed our fellow-subjects, rather than the serfs and slaves of foreign countries. That this is the proposal of policy, as well as of justice, humanity, and patriotism, however unpopular for the moment, I shall proceed to show; nor is there any other that can even contemplate to preserve to Ireland her daily bread; for the scheme of depopulation propounded by the Emigration Committee is, thank God, as impracticable as it is revolting. Withdraw this last protection, therefore, and the wish, expressed, I think, by one of the interlocutors in Edmund Spenser's *View of Ireland*, that we could set our foot upon it, and sink it to the bottom of the Atlantic ocean, would, if accomplished, be an act of kindness.

(2.) But this proposition of giving an efficient, not a nominal protection to the agriculture of Ireland, I am anxious to state, *in limine*, is not for the purpose of securing a large national rental. I shall not, however, concede to any modern theorist that this is not an essential advantage; and has always been regarded as such by all our best writers, even when the reasons



for supporting it were not an hundredth part as strong as they are at present<sup>1</sup>. It is not, I repeat, for the purpose of securing the present rental of a Duke of Devonshire, or an Earl Fitzwilliam (though no one can be indifferent upon this point, and its necessary consequences, who is at all concerned that the nation should preserve its honour, and the national creditors their property), nor yet to serve the interests of the great cultivators, but it is in behalf of an infinitely more numerous class, whom the arguers on this question generally find it convenient to lose sight of, that the proposition of a continued and efficient protection of Irish agriculture is now urged. It is for the purpose of continuing in work the cottiers; and of preserving the property of the innumerable little freeholders of Ireland; who have, most of them, if not all, obtained and purchased their interest in the soil under the operation and guarantee of laws which determined in great measure its value; laws which, however modified (and they have occasionally been unfortunately so<sup>2</sup>), have for the last century and a half professedly protected agriculture, and which protection, according to Dalton (no mean authority), is even part of "the common law<sup>3</sup>." To abrogate these, then, or render them inefficient, would commit as direct a robbery upon such, as though the legislature were to confiscate their possessions, and

<sup>1</sup> "All things must be done that may effectually increase the value of rent, and the price of land, which will add true strength to the nation."—(Davenant, *Ways and Means*, p. 140.) Of this opinion were Sir Joshua Child, Gee, Sir W. Petty, John Locke, &c., to whose works I refer the reader on this subject.

<sup>2</sup> See the Right Honourable Wm. Huskisson's Letter to a Constituent on the Corn Laws, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Dalton. *Justice*, ch. lvi.

deliver them over at once to universal idleness and starvation.

(3.) But in proceeding to consider this part of the subject, it is evident that the interests of the cultivators of Ireland cannot be discussed distinct from those of Britain; nor shall I attempt to do so. They are, as to this question, completely identified: and it would be no consolation to the Irish labourer thrown out of employ, to learn that the English one was likewise starving (which we are informed is now almost the case<sup>1</sup>); nor any compensation to the little Irish freeholder to know, that the same act which had ruined him, had likewise destroyed the property of the same class throughout the empire. For that such must be the case, at least to a very great extent, and in no long time, is demonstrably plain<sup>2</sup>. The cool proposition of Ricardo, and others of his school, that the poorer lands of the country should go out of cultivation, involves, however worded, loss of labour and destruction of property to multitudes. Such lands confessedly require the most labour; they are the possessions of the smallest proprietors; and are, generally speaking, as inferior in quality as they are limited in extent, compared with the rich abbey lands and ancient enclosures of the great land-owners. The proposition, then, is one of direct plunder, as it regards tens of thousands of the peasantry of Ireland, and of the yeomanry of England, whose lands must be abandoned, and their labour at the same time be rendered equally valueless, altering at the same time all the

<sup>1</sup> Report on Labourers' Wages, 1824, *passim*. See pp. 42, 57, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Right Honourable Wm. Huskisson's Letter, &c. p. 13.

relative values of the country : in order that the stock-jobber's pound-note may pass for thirty shillings !

Much is said at present by those who add honesty to their humanity, about an indemnity to the West Indian proprietors, supposing that the nation, which long unhappily encouraged, should no longer tolerate slavery ; but who proposes to indemnify these ? They are to be satisfied with the prophecies of political economy, whose wisdom and prescience are beginning to manifest themselves, and whose kind partiality for them was never doubted. But, seriously, if such a plan as this is to be tolerated, there needs to be no difficulty about the national incumbrances : these same projectors make none whatever regarding that part of them which the necessary relief of the poor has long imposed ; they are to be paid off at length, in a “ fair, distinct, and precise notice ”—that they shall receive no more<sup>1</sup> ; they will then be done with. Next, the great monopolies, as they are now denominated, are to be destroyed, and the property involved in them confiscated, as the *Edinburgh Review* recommends, for the public good<sup>2</sup> ; why may we not, therefore, lastly deal with the national debt itself on the same truly patriotic principle, sponge it off at once, or rather that part of it due to a hundred thousand or so of the smallest and poorest claimants ?

(4.) Political economy, it is true, rarely embarrasses its system with attending to either rights or wrongs ; but I think it would be difficult for common honesty to distinguish between so altering the law,

<sup>1</sup> Malthus, *Essay on Population*, p. 538.

<sup>2</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, No. xcii. p. 405, &c.

in letter or in spirit, as to disfranchise these freeholders, and altering it so as to rob the public creditor. The course of events has already, and in the space of a very few years, greatly enlarged the capital of the fundholder, and proportionally increased the real value of his dividend, though not its nominal amount: the same improvement has taken place as it regards the interest of all the monied capitals in the country; while, on the contrary, the agricultural property of the nation has, in the same period, been as strikingly deteriorated: but still this does not satisfy the jobbers and projectors; they meditate a blow which is to disable, if not destroy, the latter at once. Honesty, however, in their case will be found the best policy, for, so sure as they should succeed in turning a large proportion of the lands of the kingdom out of cultivation, so sure would they strike off at least a similar proportion of the national debt. The nation can, and will pay it on the same system under which it has been contracted; but it neither could, nor would, under an opposite one, which should have intentionally diminished its property to an immense amount, so as perhaps hardly to exceed its fixed incumbrance. The fundholders are certainly the mortgagees of that property; but it would be well for them to consider, whether, under such treatment, it is quite certain that the freeholders of England would allow them to foreclose. If the condition of the nation is such as to demand great sacrifices, in the name of patriotism, let them be made;—but made justly and impartially, not by singling out different interests, so as to sacrifice them to each other, one by one, for the public good. A far

surer way of serving even the separate interests of the country, is, resolutely and perseveringly to support the whole; to act upon the principle which all are ready enough to acknowledge theoretically—their reciprocal dependence; and consequently to reconcile and reunite in bonds of mutual good-will those pursuits which, in a country like this, can never be prosperous but when they are indissoluble.

(5.) One of the first questions to be determined in coming to a conclusion on the subject now under consideration, is, whether the kingdom is capable of sustaining its population by internal cultivation. That this may be confidently answered in the affirmative is now no longer a matter of doubt, even were our numbers decupled. The same cheering fact I trust I shall fully prove, in reference to every country upon earth, by calculations, showing that, on the universal law of human increase, it will never be otherwise<sup>1</sup>. On this interesting subject I must decline dwelling at present, having entered into it at large elsewhere; showing, that the ample provision of nature is administered and distributed by exertion or labour: a law as universal as it is benevolent; being,

<sup>1</sup> Were, however, the theory espoused by Mr. Malthus true, the policy of admitting foreign supplies is rendered still more doubtful and dangerous. These would, of course, according to that principle, encourage the increase of human beings in the ratio of which he speaks; and not only here, but in the supplying countries, would this multiplication go forwards, till the latter should have become so populous as to be no longer capable of yielding them. In what sort of a predicament then will the nation be placed (and in no long time) which had been thus subsisted, and consequently encouraged to go on multiplying so far beyond the utmost limits of internal supply? I admit no such principle of increase; but how will those who maintain it answer this question?

in the case of those apparent exceptions, created by civil institutions, still obeyed vicariously, and not evaded. The manner in which the labour of human beings and their wants are balanced—adjusted, on the one hand, to the necessities that have to be supplied, and, on the other, to the powers that have to supply them; and lastly, the pre-eminence of agricultural labour in this and every other respect, is there dwelt upon. To such topics, therefore, I shall not now recur; and in making these observations, at present, essential as they are to the subject, I would not be understood to disparage any other description of honest labour whatsoever, all of which I honour, and would far rather elevate than depress. Let the generous maxim of England, “Live and let live,” be the motto of them all. By assigning the first consideration to this primordial, most essential, and incomparably the most universal pursuit of mankind, other and dependent avocations are as little degraded, as would be a family of children by giving the precedency to their living parent. These, however, have too many and too powerful advocates to render it necessary to dwell upon their claims; and so successful have such been, that to vindicate the rank of that species of labour which God and nature have dictated as the first and most essential, which station has ennobled, and genius so long illustrated, actually demands an excuse, and obtains it only on the score of remaining ignorance and barbarism.

One circumstance may render the succeeding defence of British agriculture a matter of some curiosity; it is urged by one totally unconnected with it,



and who can say with Cecil,—“ I do not dwell in the country ; nor am I acquainted with the plough ; but I think that whosoever doth not maintain the plough, destroys the kingdom <sup>1</sup>.”

(6.) First, then, and to awaken attention to the importance of the subject, it may not be unnecessary to present to the reader proofs of the immense superiority of the agricultural to every other interest, even in this great commercial nation ; as so many attempts are either ignorantly or mendaciously made, especially by a part of the periodical press, to impress a contrary opinion upon those who will not give themselves the trouble to examine or hardly to think upon the subject. The supposed superiority of all other kinds of industry united, to agricultural, singly considered, receives a colour from the divisions of the census, in which the “ families chiefly employed in agriculture ;” those “ chiefly employed in trades, manufactures, and handicraft ;” and lastly, “ all other families not comprised in the preceding classes,” are discriminated. The first of these, in the grand total of Great Britain, amounting to 978,656 ; the second to 1,350,239 ; and the last (of which it is evident by far the larger proportion must have belonged to the agricultural interest) to 612,488. As to the second class, I find 415,507 described as interchangers or traders <sup>2</sup>, and, as such, at least as dependent upon agriculture as upon manufacture <sup>3</sup>. This explanation suffices to show, at once, that the latter interest is inferior to the former, which, including all its various

<sup>1</sup> Cecil ; D'Ewes, p. 674.      <sup>2</sup> Statistical Illustrations, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Right Hon. W. Huskisson, Letter on the Corn Laws, p. 12.

branches, only comprises between a third and a fourth of the population of the island.

But the general classification, thus rectified, falls far short of indicating the immense superiority in numbers of those who, properly speaking, belong to the agricultural interest. That a certain proportion of those comprised in the second class, viz., the families employed in trade and handicraft, must exclusively belong to the former one, is certain. Adam Smith needed not to have informed us that “the smiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, ploughwrights, shoemakers, &c.”<sup>1</sup>—in short, all the artisans of a strictly agricultural village, in which there is not a single manufacturer, are as decidedly belonging to agriculture, as if they were in the field instead of in the shop or at the forge; and precisely the same observation holds good of a non-manufacturing town in a county wholly agricultural. This proposition I never heard disputed, and surely it needs no proof. To ascertain the proportion of such necessary for the carrying on of that great pursuit, and dependent upon it, is, therefore, no great difficulty. We have numbers of such parishes, and not a few such entire counties. As an example of the latter, take Lincolnshire: there were in that county, in 1821, 34,900 agricultural families; 15,845 engaged in other branches of industry, of which hardly any were, strictly speaking, manufacturing; besides 8,015, which, as neither farmers nor mechanics, doubtless belonged, generally speaking, to the landed interest. Again; in Cambridgeshire, I believe similarly circumstanced, there were at the same period 15,536 agri-

<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, b. iii. ch. 1.

cultural families ; 6964 engaged in trade, handicraft, &c. ; and 3103 not belonging to either of the former classes. Now, it is quite certain, that as these counties are, to all intents and purposes, agricultural, the numbers there returned as engaged in other pursuits, indicate the proportion throughout the whole census, which is employed by, and belong to that interest solely, however classed. Including the third division, which, it is evident, must every where principally belong to the first, and in these counties necessarily so, we find that sixty-six per cent. ought to be added to those returned as engaged in agriculture, before we obtain the number dependent upon it ; but excluding the gentry, clergy, &c., from the computation, then, taking the above counties for our guide, forty-four per cent. only must be added, as the proportion virtually, though not ostensibly, engaged in agricultural pursuits, and solely relying upon that interest ; all of whom might say, in the words of the Moor of Venice, the moment it were annihilated, " Othello's occupation's gone <sup>1</sup>."

It is evident, therefore, that at least the latter proportion must be added to the first column throughout the census of Great Britain, as that directly engaged by, if not in, agriculture, though not so returned ; which will add to the 978,656 families so occupied 430,608, making together 1,409,264 ; and, reducing

<sup>1</sup> "The home consumption and brisk demand for all the various articles of the retail trader, which has so much contributed to the prosperity of our towns, would rapidly decline ; and farming servants, and all the trades which depend on agriculture for employment, would be thrown out of work."—(Right Honourable W. Huskisson's Letter on the Corn Laws, p. 12.)

those in the second column to 919,631,—making nearly 6,900,000 individuals belonging to the agricultural interest; 4,500,000 to trades, handicrafts, and manufactures, independent of it; and 3,000,000 of the class of gentry, clergy, &c. &c.,—what proportion of these ought to be given to the first division, may be left to the reader's determination. Certainly an overwhelming majority; in proof of which it will be observed, on a reference to the census, that a far larger relative number of such is constantly found wherever agriculture most prevails.

Should it be supposed that, in the preceding calculation, the numerical superiority of the interest asserted is exaggerated, I will speedily show that, on the contrary, it is much underrated. Let us advert to the census of the country more immediately under our consideration, Ireland: who doubts for an instant that the great mass of the people of that island subsist and depend on agriculture only? All the comparisons put forth make the proportion overwhelming, and the distress of the country is often, however ignorantly, attributed to this cause. Mr. M'Culloch says, three times as great a proportion are engaged in cultivation there as in England<sup>1</sup>. Turning, then, to the census of 1821, we find the total number of those occupied (including, I believe, the women and children employed) stated to be 2,836,815 persons; of whom 1,138,069 were engaged in agriculture, and 1,698,746 in all other pursuits; 1,170,044 of the latter being, as it is expressed, chiefly employed in trade, manufactures, or handicraft.

<sup>1</sup> Report on the State of Ireland, part iv. p. 834.

But manufactures there are in Ireland, at least in the north, which, it may be said, render any calculations founded on an appeal to the census generally, inadmissible. Granted. There is, however, an entire province of that country, in which these are few; or at least too few to affect the general deduction. Connaught, certainly, is almost exclusively agricultural. Yet in that province we find, of the 522,360 persons in employment, 236,605 only represented as engaged principally in agriculture: to these are attached 224,165, occupied in handicraft, trade, &c.; and 61,590 following other pursuits. But if we were to refer to the county of Galway, where are its manufactures? Yet, of the 134,109 persons employed there, still less than half, viz., 66,605 only, are reported as directly engaged in agriculture, and 67,504 in all other pursuits.

These appeals to the agricultural districts of both countries will instantly show any reasonable person the delusive nature of those superficial calculations, as to the relative importance of the two great interests of the empire, which have abounded so much of late. Not a question will be raised by any, excepting the determined theorist, but that the proportion I have taken from the second class, and added to the first, in order to determine the numbers properly belonging to the latter, errs greatly in deficiency; and certainly, had I adverted to the Irish census when I calculated it (which I had not then done), I should have greatly enlarged it; but as the inquiry will be pursued in a different manner, it is not necessary to rectify it.

Again; that a certain and a very large part of the second class, even when thus diminished, is dependent

upon agriculture, is equally undeniable. That overwhelming majority of agriculturists and their dependents, none of whom manufacture for themselves, undoubtedly give employment to a great proportion of the 4,500,000 persons still remaining in the latter division; to say nothing of the 3,000,000 of the most opulent individuals in the empire, who, it must be repeated, belong mainly to the first class, and are incomparably the best customers, in proportion to their numbers, of the second.

To determine the proportion of the second class to which agriculture gives employment, is, I confess, a matter of greater difficulty than the former calculation; nevertheless, there are data enabling us to form some ideas upon the subject, and they compel us to believe that they constitute a very considerable majority.

I do not mean to argue that the manufacturer is not as essentially necessary to the agriculturist, as the agriculturist is to the manufacturer; on the contrary, in a well-balanced state of things, they are mutually and permanently necessary to each other. My object is to serve the interests of both, by exhibiting the magnitude and importance of the one which our theorists would place in jeopardy; the destruction of which, by constant foreign interference, I contend would inevitably ruin all.

But supposing we could correctly ascertain the number employed, independently of home demand, still we have to consider that the amount of the exported product of the labours of that number, whatever it may be, is probably at this moment about balanced by the importation of the product of foreign



industry into this country ; their employment, therefore, by foreigners, has the effect, in most cases, of putting out of employment, by the same means, an equal number of our own people ; so that the labour account is, so far, balanced, whatever other advantages may result. I would certainly encourage this intercourse, so far as it is not evidently pernicious ; always remembering, however, that that description of labour which depends exclusively or principally on foreign demand, is in its very nature far more variable and uncertain, and consequently less valuable, than that which is created by internal consumption<sup>1</sup>.

(7.) Let us now proceed to substantiate the foregoing results, by calculations founded upon pecuniary data, which now seems the prevailing method :—I find, in a statistical document which manifests considerable research, the following statements. There are forty millions of acres of cultivated land in Great Britain, and ten millions in Ireland, the total annual value of the produce of which is three hundred millions : the annual value of the manufactured or artificial production of the united kingdom amounts to £170,000,000<sup>2</sup>. The total of the products and manufactures, then, exported, estimated, at their declared value, £37,573,918 : but from the latter sum must be deducted a due proportion of the value of the raw materials of foreign growth or production, of which some of them were fabricated, before the remunera-

<sup>1</sup> “Those riches are of a bad kind that depend on accidental circumstances, and not upon the industry of a people and the cultivation of their lands.”—(Montesquieu, vol. ii. p. 182.)

<sup>2</sup>The above statement is upon authority, which I copied, but regret to say I have forgotten from whom, not having noted it at the time.

tion of British industry can be estimated; the principal articles only of such imports, such as cotton, silk, wool, hemp, and flax, amounting to many millions, while not to one halfpenny of such deductions is the product of agricultural labour liable<sup>1</sup>. The total amount, as has been before stated, it is conceived by some is about balanced by our imports. Some of these statements may appear exaggerations: I will, therefore, insert similar ones from another authority, reminding the reader that the exactness of the actual amounts is less important to the argument than the correctness of their relative proportions, which it is not likely can err very greatly. Colquhoun, in 1812 (since when upwards of a million acres of land have been enclosed), thus estimates these values:—"Agriculture, in all its branches, including minerals, nearly 226 millions; manufactures, and handicraft work of every branch, rather above 114 millions<sup>2</sup>: foreign exports (exclusive of those to Ireland) were that year nearly thirty-eight millions<sup>3</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> It may be interesting to present the imports of this nature in a single year. I take the last to which I have had access.—(Parl. Paper, No. 541, 1827.)

Flax . . . .	£2,078,844	} Ireland might be encouraged to grow these in abundant quantities.
Hemp . . . .	490,603	
Silk . . . .	1,437,336	
Thrown ditto . .	928,245	
Cotton . . . .	7,405,619	
Wool . . . .	1,436,606	
<hr/>		
£13,777,253		

Besides untanned hides, dyeing goods, &c. &c., to an immense amount, which enter largely into the values of certain of our exports.

<sup>2</sup> Colquhoun, Treatise on the Wealth, &c. of the British Empire, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Rather more than 31 millions, declared values, according to the account in the Statistical Tables, p. 44.

From the latter sum must of course be subtracted the difference between official and real values, and the cost of the foreign raw materials of which some of them consisted, to make the comparison correct: but without these great deductions, which may serve as a set-off against any incorrectness in the statement, of which, however, I am not aware,—and exclusive of the inland trade, which he makes to amount that year to thirty-one and a half millions,—the comparison between the actual value of our agricultural products, our manufactured ones, and the amount of both exported, stands about in this proportion, 6—3—1. In the former statement about thus, 8—4½—1. Both of these calculations, however, for reasons already alluded to, give the proportion of the last class much too large, small as it appears.

The same inquiry may be pursued in a still different mode, that is, by examining the proportions which these interests respectively contributed to the property tax; only we have here no means of determining what part of the gains arising from commerce and manufactures fairly belonged to our foreign trade, which forms an important branch of our present subject. The last product of that tax amounted to £15,298,982, from which must be deducted the sums of £1,167,678 and £2,885,505; the former being the amount charged upon pensions, salaries, &c., and the latter that on funded property, neither of which has to do with the present comparison. The remainder amounts to £11,245,799, of which £8,099,467 were the contribution of the landed interest, including both that of the owners and occupiers,

and £3,146,322, that which arose from trade, manufactures, &c., even including professional gains. What part, therefore, of the latter sum fell upon foreign trade, the preceding inquiries may partly enable us to judge; certainly not nearly one-third; but admitting it to be as much, in that case the proportions would stand thus, 8—3—1.

The last method of comparison, of which I shall avail myself, is that which is afforded by the public accounts relative to our national charity, the poor's rate of England and Wales. The last report to which I have at present access, is that of 1824, in which the whole amount assessed (including some extraneous charges) is £6,703,501. Of this sum £4,693,162 was levied on the landed interest; £1,762,950 on dwelling houses; and £247,389 on mills and factories<sup>1</sup>! The last of these, however, either find or create a fair proportion of poor wherever they are established; and yet this is the proportion of their contribution. It must be observed, that the second of these items includes the tax, to this charity, of all the great landed proprietors in the country; as such pay upon their house-rent or its value, they are of course, in this case, included in the commercial and manufacturing class. Still, however, without any correction whatever, on this reasonable ground the proportions stand thus: 19—7—1.

Similar comparisons might be founded on a variety of other data, such as the estimated circulation of the country, the banking returns of the kingdom, &c.; but the former statements resting on recorded facts,

<sup>1</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Poor's Rate, 1824.

it would only weaken the argument, to place it on conjectural grounds. I will only add, that the public documents already adduced are, as it strikes me, all that bear upon the subject; with these no liberties can be taken, and, so far from having strained them to my purpose, it will have been seen, that in no instance have the deductions been as strong as they would have warranted and seemed to require.

But, still, should the foregoing conclusions be cavilled at or disputed, I will cheerfully leave the determination of the question even to those who are the most adverse to them, on one condition, which is simply this; that, in making their own calculations, they will, as the Chinese do, reckon up the inhabitants of the United Kingdom by mouths, recollecting, at the same time, that they have backs, and that, as human beings, at least in these regions, they require habitations and furniture; and finally, that, by a benevolent ordination of Divine Providence, the wants thus created are perpetually recurring. The computations founded upon these considerations, of however moderate a nature, will immediately manifest to such the necessary pre-eminence of agriculture, compared with every other pursuit, or all of them put together<sup>1</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> There are in the population of the United Kingdom at least fifteen millions, who are either adults, or young persons of an age consuming of all kinds of agricultural produce, excepting liquor, as much as adults. Some of these, it is to be feared, live sparingly; but considering the numbers in the middle and higher ranks of society in this kingdom, who live very liberally, it will not be very difficult to estimate, with sufficient correctness for our purpose, the immense amounts in agricultural produce that are consumed annually. To these must, of course, be added, the necessities and conveniences of life which are demanded by this great population. A comparison of the total demand thus created and sup-

and next the immense superiority of that part of our trade which is supported by home consumption, compared with that dependant upon foreign demand : a conclusion which ought to gratify every real patriot, and, in my humble opinion, the manufacturer in particular.

Other misconceptions, quite as glaring as the one disposed of, are entertained touching this important subject ; one of these, that England could not sustain herself, has been already adverted to, and is now nearly passed away : the calculations of scientific and practical men upon this subject, the demonstrations by which we are surrounded, and the lights of past experience, warrant us in asserting that she could do so with as vast an accession to the comforts of her people as to their numbers ; ratios which, happily for human beings, advance hand in hand, all that a darker theory is perpetually uttering to the contrary notwithstanding. I shall, therefore, only add an *argumentum ad verecundiam* to the proofs which have been previously advanced on this point ; the prime minister of the country, within less than half a dozen years back, pronounced that the unexampled distresses of agriculture proceeded from “ over-production.” If authority of another order will be more acceptable to some, it is at hand. Mr. Brougham said, half a dozen years before (when agriculture was far less depressed), in a speech in parliament, afterwards printed, that the cause of the distress then existing

plied by internal industry, with that made by foreign trade in the most prosperous years, sinks the latter into insignificance.



was “redundance of produce<sup>1</sup>.” The ports of England had been closed (with one exception) for several years preceding Lord Liverpool’s speech, and yet he stated that the remedy for the distresses of agriculture was diminished cultivation. But to what an extent would an adequate demand increase the produce of the land already cultured, to say nothing of the thirty millions of acres now untouched! This objection, however, to do the opponents of agriculture justice, is now rarely advanced by those who are worth attending to. The principal argument is founded on “dear bread,” which some are of opinion the present system occasions, and which they imagine would be remedied by a free trade in corn.

(8.) But neither is this objection true. Corn is *not* dear; corn, contrasted with almost every other product of human labour, is far cheaper than it was in past times: I say, of human labour; for the fields are not, as yet, tilled by steam, nor the harvests gathered in by complicated machinery. To compare the labour of the human being, therefore, with the products of the steam loom, would be cruel and absurd. To the point, then: wheat, from 1600 to 1700, averaged 48s. 5d. per quarter<sup>2</sup>; from 1700 to 1800, 42s. 9d. per quarter. Since 1800, a new era has arisen; but will any one contend, taking into consideration the constant influx into Europe of the precious metals, during the whole period, and the vaster inundation of a paper circulation (rendered, as I think, indispensable by our debt), that corn is not, at this moment, far

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Brougham, Speech, 7th March, 1816.

<sup>2</sup> Sir F. Morton Eden’s Hist. of the Poor, vol. iii., Appendix.

cheaper than it was on the average of either period ? Again : the last year's average price, of which I am in possession, is that of 1826, and it was the year in which so much was said about dear and famine prices ; it was nearly 7*s.* 2*d.* per bushel : just a century before, viz., in 1726, the price of the Winchester bushel was 6*s.* 6*d.* ; still another hundred years previously, viz., in 1626, it was 6*s.* 2*d.* At the moment I am writing, I believe the average price of the same measure is not even so much<sup>1</sup>. Such is the trifling advance, or, rather, the great real declension on wheat. During the same period, the public revenue had been increased one hundred-fold ; and the poor-rates, falling principally on the cultivator, about thirty-fold. Now, I ask, where is the labourer or artisan, whatever his business, who, calculating from the former period, would be content with a similar advance on the established wages of his calling ? or which are the servants, public or private, who would be gratified with a like increase ? Some of the former were lately condoling one another on being very ill paid ; but I plainly ask such, while they are legislating on the proper protection of the farmers to such a nicety, whether they would like to be remunerated by a kind of corn-rent salary, calculated on the price of wheat and the amount of the stipends of James the First's reign ? No fact upon earth is clearer than that the real price of wheat has greatly lowered during this long period ; nor is another cheering truth less certain, that its consumption has, in the mean time, been vastly extended, till at length it has become the bread

<sup>1</sup> December 1827.

of the lower classes:—facts these, were there none else, which ought to have overturned Mr. Malthus's ratios long ago, and, indeed, placed them topsy-turvy.

(9.) Amongst the names that have given some degree of sanction to the clamour concerning the present prices of corn, I regret to observe there is one which has always had, deservedly, great weight. Whether the change of his opinions, so often and so ably expressed, on the subject under discussion, was in consequence of one of those sudden conversions which are now far more common and contagious in the political world than ever they were in the religious; or whether it was imposed upon a yielding intellect, once so comprehensive and decisive, but weakened and worn out in the service of his country, I know not; but it is due to my subject to state the astonishing oversight into which he fell, on this point, in the last stage of his distinguished career. In February, 1822, it was that his lordship (the Earl of Liverpool) made his celebrated speech on the agricultural distresses of the country; attributing them to causes over which government had no control, and for which, consequently, they had no remedy. He deeply deplored, however, the ruinous condition into which the cultivators of the empire were plunged, attributing it to the want of a market for their produce, and, indeed, as has been before observed, to an over-production of it; expressing hopes of a gradual and effectual amendment. Four years afterwards, and only four, that is, in 1826, we hear his lordship holding very different language, and, looking at the protection of agriculture and its remuneration, he

made use of an expression which, from other lips, would have been deemed highly injurious and inflammatory. But even he was not superior to the prevalent and pernicious practice of adopting a current phrase ; which almost always supersedes the necessity of an argument, and has often the effect of silencing one : he applied the term “famine-price” to the subject ; which, if I recollect right, was repeated from other high quarters, if not, indeed, suggested from such : and, when this expression was dropped, equivalent ones were still used<sup>1</sup>. Now, what will the candid reader suppose was the difference in the price of the bushel of wheat, on the average of the six months immediately preceding the first speech ; a price which he had deplored so feelingly, as so far from being a remuneration to the growers, that it had occasioned the ruin of numbers of them ; and the price of the last six months of the year 1826, when, on the assumption of this “famine-price,” so much corn was introduced into the country ? Nearly, and not quite, *three farthings a bushel* ! This is hardly credible, and I consequently subjoin the proofs<sup>2</sup>. But, if the expression came in during the first six months of that year (though it was only acted upon in the second), the difference amounted to fourpence three farthings. And, when it is recollected that the first six months are of course those most remote from the preceding harvest, and, consequently, requiring a better price to indemnify the holder than the last six months of the year ; practically speaking,

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, Parl. Deb., vol. xv. p. 1092.

<sup>2</sup> Prices of the Quarter of Wheat on the “General Average

the first half of the year was, in this instance, the cheapest, notwithstanding the difference of fourpence. In one sense, therefore, never was there a more appropriate term hit upon than “famine-price;” it had a double and, indeed, universal application, and equally well described what it had been declared, by the same lips, to be, first to the growers, and now to the consumers. If correct in the latter case, to what

which governs Importation,” extracted from the *London Gazette*, of the undermentioned dates:—

	1821.	s.	d.
August	4 . . .	52	4
	11 . . .	53	4
	18 . . .	55	3
	25 . . .	56	0
Sept.	1 . . .	55	10
	8 . . .	54	7
	15 . . .	55	8
	22 . . .	61	6
	29 . . .	68	10
October	6 . . .	70	7
	13 . . .	64	7
	20 . . .	61	4
	27 . . .	58	4
Nov.	3 . . .	55	3
	10 . . .	55	1
	17 . . .	55	2
	24 . . .	55	4
Dec.	1 . . .	53	11
	8 . . .	51	11
	15 . . .	51	2
	22 . . .	49	4
	29 . . .	46	8
1822. Jan.	5 . . .	46	2
	12 . . .	45	11
	19 . . .	48	11
	26 . . .	49	3
		1,433	3

Average per Quarter 55 1½  
Per Win. bushel 6 10¼

	1826.	s.	d.
July	7 . . .	55	11
	14 . . .	55	11
	21 . . .	56	5
	28 . . .	56	10
August	4 . . .	57	4
	11 . . .	57	7
	18 . . .	57	2
	25 . . .	56	6
Sept.	1 . . .	55	8
	18 . . .	55	8
	15 . . .	56	3
	22 . . .	55	11
	29 . . .	55	0
October	6 . . .	54	11
	13 . . .	54	9
	20 . . .	54	6
	27 . . .	54	3
Nov.	3 . . .	54	1
	10 . . .	54	3
	17 . . .	55	0
	24 . . .	55	9
Dec.	1 . . .	55	11
	8 . . .	56	6
	15 . . .	56	5
	22 . . .	56	4
	29 . . .	55	6
		1,450	4

Average per Quarter 55 9¼  
Per Win. bushel 6 11¼

a glorious state and condition has our new policy already conducted us<sup>1</sup>!

It cannot, however, be disputed but that the real price of wheat has been declining for centuries past, notwithstanding its use has happily become so much more general, even amongst the lowest classes of the community, than it was in former times.

(10.) But even supposing it were desirable still further to bear down the prices which the grower at present receives, with a view to permanently cheapening every thing amongst us, including of course the wages of labour, which is one of the avowed motives for so doing, it is not quite clear that destroying the home cultivators would answer that purpose. Looking at the past experience of the country (and we can have no safer guide), we think to the contrary. The experiment of allowing foreign growers to glut our markets, to the extinction of many of the home ones, has been anciently tried: at first, indeed, it beat down the prices to almost nothing, but afterwards invariably heightened them, and sometimes into actual (not the-

<sup>1</sup> I am aware that much was said, and may be repeated, about the remission of taxes in the interim. Was that remission, were it all placed to the agricultural account, anything approaching in amount to the deterioration which that interest had already suffered, while the monied one had been as greatly on the advance? But between 1822 and 1826, that remission, as it respected the agriculturists, did not amount to a half per cent. on their produce, though the proposition was to take off about thirty-three per cent. from their protection, as compared with that of 1815; the value of that produce having, in the mean time, fallen so greatly. The tax upon malt was not paid by the grower, but the consumer, as the government often argued; and that its partial repeal did little for the former, is evident from the excise accounts. There was not so much barley paid for, as malted in the year ensuing, as there had occasionally been above thirty years before.



oretical) famine. But to look to more modern times. In Queen Elizabeth's days, Lord Bacon informs us, that "it drained much coin of the kingdom, to furnish us with corn from foreign parts<sup>1</sup>;" and yet what did this importation do for the country? Its ultimate effect was, by thus discouraging and putting down the home grower, to raise the price of grain so much, that the latter part of her reign was almost a continued dearth. That great man's advice on the occasion was thus expressed: "I may truly say to the English, Go to the pismire, thou sluggard<sup>2</sup>." In the succeeding reign, notwithstanding there was still not nearly half, if much more than a third of the present population, this system continued, to the great hindrance of internal industry, and the consequent damage of the public interest. There was still a selfish faction that argued, as at present, in favour of turning the country into a sheep-walk; asserting, as now, that England could not sustain its people with bread; or, rather, that it was more profitable to be supplied by others, and, in spite of such men as More, and Bacon, and Raleigh, they prevailed. From the former of these I have already quoted at large; the last, memorializing King James, states, that "corn had in some years cost England two millions sterling<sup>3</sup>;" and, speaking of such ruinous importations from foreigners, he says, "it is to the dishonour of the land that they should serve this famous kingdom, WHICH GOD HAS SO ENABLED WITHIN ITSELF<sup>4</sup>." He says, elsewhere, and how truly succeeding times

<sup>1</sup> Bacon's Works, vol. i. p. 454.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 462.

<sup>3</sup> Raleigh's Works, vol. ii. p. 117, (8vo. 1751.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 118.

have shown, that “all nations abound with corn<sup>1</sup>,” hence the interest and duty of each is manifest, to increase the products of the earth as they become necessary, and that by encouraging internal industry instead of superseding it. As to the desideratum of our modern school, he thus expresses himself: “If corn is too cheap, the husbandman is undone, whom we must provide for, FOR HE IS THE STAPLE MAN OF THE KINGDOM<sup>2</sup>.” An opinion which we have been attempting to prove is as true at the present moment, as it was when he uttered it.

Supposing that we were to admit it to be true, in theory, that a full protection to the British grower has a tendency to raise the price ultimately, still it is false in fact. This dispute may be easily decided. Examine the matter from the period we have been just adverting to (King James the First’s reign), down to the year 1670, when the first effectual protection was given to the British grower<sup>3</sup>; and again, from that time through a still longer period, comprehending, together, the experience of above a century and a half, and it will be seen that the “monopoly” of their own market, by the British cultivators, had the

<sup>1</sup> D’Ewes, p. 674.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 674.

<sup>3</sup> It may not be unnecessary to state the nature and extent of this protection. By the act of 22 C. II. ch. 18, the duty laid upon imported wheat was this:—

When the price was 53s. 4d. per quarter, 16s.

When not exceeding 80s. ditto, 8s.

When it exceeded 80s. ditto, 5s. 4d.

Our theorists may easily turn these sums into money of the present day. In subsequent times, direct bounties were given upon corn exported; a principle for which I do not contend, though without conceding that, at the time, it probably operated as a national advantage.

positive effect of lowering even the money-price of grain, while that of every thing else, during the same term, had so greatly advanced. The dear times of the late French wars one cannot reasonably appeal to, in any of these comparisons, otherwise they would most powerfully corroborate these facts; the whole period being (with a short exception) one of unlimited importation, and often, indeed, of direct bounties upon it. But in the course of the long period adverted to above, the government of the country, yielding at length, for a time, to a different policy, considerably relaxed in its protection of internal industry: the consequences shall be expressed in the forcible and perspicuous language of a minister of his Majesty's present government: "During upwards of one hundred years," says Mr. Huskisson, "up to the year 1765, the import of foreign corn was restrained by very high duties. What was the state of the country during these one hundred years? That, in ordinary seasons, our own growth supplied a stock of corn fully ample for our consumption;—that, in abundant seasons, we had some to spare, which we *exported*;—that, in bad seasons, we felt no want, and were under no apprehension;—that the price of corn seldom varied more than a few shillings per quarter;—that we had no years of inordinate gain to the farmer, or of starvation to the consumer;—that prices, instead of rising from year to year, were gradually diminishing;—so that, at the end of this long period of a century, during which we never imported foreign corn, they were actually one-fifth lower than at the beginning of it. Would to God that we had conti-

nued this salutary system! But in 1765, it was unfortunately abandoned. What has been the result? Precisely the reverse of the former system. Instead of a steady supply, afforded at steady and moderate prices, we have witnessed frequent and alarming scarcities." But I must refer the reader, for a full description of the consequences of this unhappy departure from the true policy of the country, to the whole of his admirable letter, and shall conclude in his language: "*we must go back to the principles of our forefathers; and, by reverting as much as possible to their system, we shall secure to ourselves and our posterity all the benefits which they derived from it*<sup>1</sup>."

To the reader, who may not be acquainted with the precise consequences of this "unfortunate abandonment," it may not be superfluous to state, that, without selecting particular years, but taking, at once, the prices ten years before and ten years after this event; the change in the policy of the country, by depressing the security and the hopes, and consequently the efforts of the British agriculturist, raised the price of wheat *nearly one half*<sup>2</sup>, and that not by a gradual, but by a marked and instantaneous advance<sup>3</sup>, which

<sup>1</sup> Rt. Hon. W. Huskisson's Letter on the Corn Laws, pp. 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> 1755—1764, 5s. 3d. per bushel: 1765—1774, 7s. 2d. per bushel.

<sup>3</sup> On a question of such immense moment as the foregoing, it would be a species of infatuation not to add to the experience of our own, that of other nations, which, on a matter of universal concernment, must, one way or the other, be equally conclusive. This, in all the instances I have been hitherto able to appeal to, fully confirms, and, indeed, dictates the preceding argument. One example only shall, on this occasion, be adduced, and that of a country of all others seemingly the best calculated to put the principle, for which I am contending, to the severest test, being one which had partly subsisted upon importation for ages, and had been subject to distressing fluctuations in crops, to an extent little

continued increasing till the better system was at length restored.

(11.) Another standing argument in favour of a constant admission of foreign grain is, that its effect would be the equalization of prices; and indeed the present legislative policy seems to be founded expressly upon that principle: and supposing it should accomplish that purpose, it would be difficult to justify the proposition on such a ground; difficult, I think, to defend it from being as flagrant an act of

known elsewhere; and which, Mr. Malthus says, is “one of the most barren and worst-supplied countries of Europe\*.” I mean Sweden. But a different system has now been established. “Since 1820,” we are officially informed, “the duties upon foreign grain have been so high as to be equivalent to a prohibition, and no importation could take place.”—The effect may be thus described: “Formerly, Sweden was, in the best of years, obliged to import from 100,000 to 200,000 quarters annually, whereas latterly—she could have exported. The excess has been converted into spirits, to the great injury of the inhabitants†.” The effects of the alteration in the system will, however, be best seen in the following official statement of prices six years before, and (including the year in which it took place) as many years afterwards. They were as follow:—

Before Prohibition.		At and after Prohibition.	
Year.	Sterling Price per Quarter.	Year.	Sterling Price per Quarter.
1814.....	34 11	1820.....	19 8
1816.....	24 2	1821.....	16 8
1815.....	25 5	1822.....	18 8
1817.....	29 4	1823.....	16 2
1818.....	33 11	1824.....	15 11
1819.....	28 5	1825.....	17 3

Will the advocates for a contrary policy give us as striking an instance in favour of their argument, or indeed any single practical illustration of it?

I said I would refer to one instance only; but I am tempted to add another; one nearer home, and more obvious to our notice—France: we are again informed that “the importation of foreign grain, for the consumption of France, has been virtually prohibited since the year 1819; exportation, however, being allowed:” and

\* Sixth Edition. vol. ii. p. 198.

† Return to all Accounts, Parliamentary Paper. 41. p. 8.

unfairness as ever was meditated. The fluctuation in the prices of grain (I mean the usual and ordinary variations) is a natural result of the difference in the crops, and answers a valuable and necessary end, in inducing us to husband our resources when they happen to become deficient. But this proposal goes to deprive the cultivator of the only remuneration which he can expect, when he has a partial failure in any of his produce; and this "equalization" is, therefore, in many cases, only another term for ruin, as it regards him: it is a proposition to throw the entire distress upon those alone, who, in ordinary times, are the least able to bear it, instead of lightening the pressure by sharing it, in some sort, amongst the entire community; still protecting, however, the poor from absolute want, by means of our national charity, to

that "such is the actual state of the law." Take we then from the official document, which accompanies this information, the prices of wheat throughout France, for the seven subsequent years, with the last of which the statement closes, and the seven preceding ones, and the following are the results, reduced to British money and measure:—

Before Prohibition.			At and after Prohibition.		
Year.	Sterling Price per Winchester Qr.		Year.	Sterling Price per Winchester Qr.	
	s.	d.		s.	d.
1812.....	87	11½	1819.....	47	2½
1813.....	57	10	1820... ..	49	1½
1814.....	45	8½	1821.....	45	6½
1815.....	49	4	1822.....	39	7½
1816.....	62	6¼	1823.....	44	10
1817.....	92	7¼	1824.....	42	6¼
1818.....	63	1¾	1825.....	40	3½
	459	1½		309	2¼*
	65	7		44	2

These facts require no comment.

\* Parl. Papers, No. 157; Grain, Foreign Countries, p. 13.



which none will deny that the farmer contributes his full share. In a word, this notable expedient proposes to render every season, as far as it can accomplish its purpose, alike disastrous to the cultivator. A superabundant crop, of course, lowers his remuneration; and he says, as of old, *inopem me copia fecit*; and a failing one is to bring him no additional price: and this is the policy that is proposed to be adopted in regard to agriculture!

But I deny the assumption; still appealing to experience. Again commencing with 1601; from thence to 1670, the year in which, as previously observed, effectual protection was afforded to agriculture, the fluctuations in price were far greater and more frequent than those which occurred afterwards; excepting we carry our comparison from 1765 and through the period of the revolutionary wars of France; when, as already observed, importation was almost unlimited, and the fluctuations were consequently very great. But, on this part of the dispute, at all events, decisive proofs are at hand. We are surrounded by countries in which the import of grain has been, practically speaking, altogether free and unrestrained. In which of these have the fluctuations been less than those in England during the periods in which her agriculture has been strictly protected? On the contrary, even in the exporting countries, they have been much more severe, including the descriptions of grain principally consumed by the inhabitants, and little exported<sup>1</sup>. In Antwerp I find the variations

<sup>1</sup> See Returns relative to Foreign Corn, Paper 44; Dantzic, No. 2.

are as wide as between *f*2.10 and *f*11.27 per mude; and, even within the last ten years, as great as from *f*3.00 to *f*11.27<sup>1</sup>.

Those who declaim against the monopoly, as they call it, of the English market by Englishmen, a singular sort of complaint, are constantly accusing those who advocate the cause of the latter, as being the advocates of high prices, regardless of the consequences. The accusation is injuriously false. They are the advocates for that protection which nature itself dictates, and which our peculiar circumstances especially demand; they are the advocates of a more minute, perfect, and extended system of internal cultivation, which they assert, appealing to past history (which is as good authority as their prophecies), would increase the supplies of the necessities of life instead of diminishing them; lower their prices instead of advancing them; and be the sure means, as heretofore, of conducting the country to permanent and increasing plenty, prosperity, and happiness.

(12.) If the foregoing arguments should be retorted on the advocates of the English growers, and it be asked with an air of triumph, why they oppose the constant introduction of foreign grain, since its effects, according to their own showing, would not be to lower its price, but rather to the contrary,—they have this distinct and decisive answer, and let it be fully and fairly met. It is because they would have the price, whatever it be, to go into the pockets of their own countrymen, from whence they well know it would be distributed to the uttermost farthing through

<sup>1</sup> See Returns relative to Foreign Corn, p. 69.

every class of the community, feeding and invigorating all its several interests, and promoting the prosperity of the whole: but let the immense sums, which the question assuredly involves, be passed to the serfs of Poland or of Russia, or rather to their owners, and they have yet to be convinced that its tithe would find its way back again to its original possessors, excepting in paper statements and hypotheses, the value of which individuals, as well as the nation at large, are beginning to appreciate.

(13.) Some, I believe, have argued in favour of a regular importation of foreign produce, from a conscientious conviction that a dependence upon some other country or countries for part of our daily bread is the best way to secure ourselves from scarcities. This idea, however, it requires little consideration to confute. Without the tuition of political economy, we know that no nation or nations, any more than so many individuals, will continue regularly to grow without as regular a demand; and, therefore, supposing we grow enough for ourselves at present, just so much of our necessary supply as we should then take from other agriculturists, we should no longer continue to take from our own. The supply and demand would very soon become very accurately adjusted; that the part of our supply, therefore, which would be furnished from abroad (and it would then become an essential part) should be more certain than it would have been, if it had been furnished from our own, then abandoned, fields, is impossible; that it would be less so is certain. In case of a scarcity in the country or countries accustomed to yield it (and these are, at least, as

liable to such events as our own), it is quite obvious they would supply themselves first; and on their situation would depend whether our usual supply should be greatly diminished, or entirely withdrawn: whereas, had we continued to be supported from our internal resources, we should then have had the whole of what nature produced, and the difficulties would have been shared amongst us.

It is quite evident how a country, under such circumstances of internal scarcity, would act. They would not then exchange their corn for our cottons. No government would allow—no people endure it. It does not require the reasoning powers of a Locke to inform us, that “things absolutely necessary for life must be had” and retained, “at any rate, but things convenient will be had only as they stand in preference with other conveniences<sup>1</sup>.” Let those who think that a constant

<sup>1</sup> Locke, *Considerations of the Lowering of Interest*; Works, vol. ii. p. 16. To give an historical illustration of this incontrovertible truth, Sweden formerly acted upon the idea, that to import grain was to provide against scarcities; which, notwithstanding such supplies, were perpetually recurring. She had, however, a severe lesson on the impolicy of this plan, and profited by it. “The Swedes,” says an author, who wrote about half a century ago, “purchased considerable quantities of corn, till some years ago, a prohibition of exportation” (in consequence of a scarcity at home) “stopped our supplying them in a time of need; which was attended with so great an effect, that from that time they set about the business of cultivation with such vigour, that ever since they have supplied themselves, and exported a small quantity.”

Her exports have, since then, greatly increased, notwithstanding a deplorably large consumption of grain in her distilleries. I cannot help applying Mr. Malthus's doctrine to this country, to which, indeed, he has appealed so much in his Essay. Are not the ratios, of which he speaks, precisely reversed again, as it regards Sweden, notwithstanding all his prognostications to the contrary? He affects to ridicule the government for “crying out for population, population!” Population, however, has greatly increased, and, with that increase, has augmented individual plenty and pros-

dependence upon external supplies is the way to ward off scarcities answer his argument, and they will then only have to reconcile their theory to historical facts. Nor must it be forgotten, in determining this point, that the most striking variations in the seasons, and consequently in the crops of Europe, are rarely partial, but almost always general, if not universal.

(14.) But with respect to those accidental scarcities, which are thus made the apology for recommending a policy which would occasion a permanent one, and has often done so, I have elsewhere, I think, fully proved that, amongst the other incalculable advantages of a large and growing population, may be included that of diminishing the frequency and severity of such calamities, and perhaps of ultimately causing them to cease altogether: the last supposition is, I confess, the conclusion at which I have arrived, after having given the best attention to the subject I could. Certainly, historical facts favour this conclusion; and philosophy may thus expound it: variations in climate and seasons are, as far as we yet know, the sole causes of variations in the produce of land equally cultivated. And what is it that meliorates climate, and mitigates and equalizes the seasons, but cultivation<sup>1</sup>? Universal cultivation, therefore, is

perity in a still greater ratio. Sweden is now, therefore, an exporting country: it is thus that in every country, however circumstanced, Nature spreads a common feast for all that live; a feast where there is "room enough and to spare!"

<sup>1</sup> "Let us remember that it is man himself who has in great measure created these climates. France, Germany, and England, not more than twenty centuries ago, resembled Canada and Chinese Tartary; countries situated, as well as our Europe, at a mean distance between the equator and the pole."—(Malte-Brun. Geog. vol. i. p. 417.)

not merely the means of rendering the different countries more salubrious,—an advantage which has been long apparent ; but it becomes the best, and indeed the sufficient security which nature affords for an equal, as well as an abundant produce. Here again the experience of mankind comes in aid of our argument, which, if true, proves that to throw a portion of our lands out of cultivation would be to render the rest less certainly productive : the converse of this position is clearly the fact. But I shall not again enter upon this subject further ; but sum up what I have said on this part of the argument in the words of one who, it will be generally admitted, understood the real interests of his country, and who anxiously turned his comprehensive mind to the consideration of this particular subject, at a very trying time in relation to it : “THE LESS,” said Mr. Pitt, “WE WERE TO DEPEND UPON OTHER NATIONS FOR OUR SUPPLY, THE LESS WE HAVE TO APPREHEND<sup>1</sup>.” Or, to express the same truth in the language of a statesman of the present day, Mr. Huskisson,—“There is no effectual security, either in peace or war, against the frequent return of scarcity, approaching to starvation, but in maintaining ourselves, habitually, INDEPENDENT OF FOREIGN SUPPLY<sup>2</sup>.”

(15.) But here, again, it is quite necessary that the advocates of internal industry should not be mis-

<sup>1</sup> Pitt's Speech, 4th December, 1802.

<sup>2</sup> Right Honourable William Huskisson's Letter on the Corn Laws. He observes—“The habitually importing country, which, even in a good season, depends on the aid of foreign corn—deprived of that aid in a year of scarcity, is driven to distress bordering upon famine.”



understood; misrepresented they must expect to be. If an actual scarcity should occur in the country, happily an event of no common occurrence at present, resort instantly to foreign supplies; as the single family did, that possessed a region which afterwards supported millions in uninterrupted plenty, go down to Egypt, and take your money in your sacks. But let an honest and intrepid ministry, who are honoured and remunerated for their responsibility, determine in this case; without consulting momentary popularity, let them attend to the present wants, and yet secure the permanent interests of the country. But common sense surely instructs us to believe that in this, as in all other cases whatsoever, to resort to an expedient in common, is to render it wholly inefficacious, if the real emergency should unhappily arise.

(16.) But it is proper to notice one or two pleas of a nature different to the foregoing, which are usually urged in behalf of a free trade in corn. The first of these, however, it is almost hopeless to contend with, as it is quite insensible to facts, otherwise it would have been silenced long since. It is, that the importation from foreign countries would necessarily be so small, even in an unrestricted trade, that it would make little impression upon the home market. This idea rests upon two grand mistakes: first, that of estimating, on some rude guess, the whole quantity grown at present by foreigners for exportation, which, we are told, is so trifling as not to be able materially to affect the markets of this country. I am not anxious to contradict this; for, as almost all

countries stupidly enough persist in feeding themselves, since God has given them the means of so doing, it is not very likely that others should grow more than they want, and what they have no prospect of disposing of. But the question is, what would be the amount of their supply if they were allowed free access to our markets? I contend that it would equal the demand whatever that might be. A single province of one of these countries which is kindly bent upon feeding us, would suffice, as that honest and intelligent traveller, Bell, of Autermony, says, to sustain all. England, does he say? All Europe<sup>1</sup>! But we are told that the land lying on the borders of rivers is pretty much cultivated already; a fact on which a ministerial envoy has dwelt very emphatically: but to place the protection of British industry upon such a basis as this is a little too gross. Pray, it may be asked, with such an irresistible motive as a constant and profitable market, which would provide adequate means for such undertakings, would not internal communications be made and multiplied; and even till then, could not the lands in the interior of the different countries be devoted to the sustentation of the inhabitants, and those on the banks of these rivers be exclusively dedicated to our supply?—and would not this naturally and certainly be the case? I have before me an account of the British merchandise said to steal into Germany through the ramifications of the Elbe; and could not German produce as easily steal out through similar apertures? The whole of this argument is idle in the extreme. The sure and con-

<sup>1</sup> Bell, Travels, vol. ii. p. 159.

stant operation of adequate causes would bring into cultivation just so much of the rich, but hitherto uncultivated regions of the north of Europe, as England, neglecting her own cultivators, might require; she would only be limited in the supplies by her means of purchasing. The population on the square mile, in these fertile corn-growing countries, hardly any of which are wheat-eaters, is of itself a sufficient reply to all these singular representations; but to rest the vital interest of the empire upon a mere *ipse dixit*, is rather too much, especially after our experience on this head. Again: many not unfriendly to agriculture would hazard its interests, from the misconceptions long set afloat, respecting the supposed impossibility of transporting to this country sufficient quantities of foreign produce, to interfere materially with the home market. This is a great, though a common error, and requires the most direct confutation. Even Adam Smith fell into it, estimating the average quantity of corn annually imported at only a five hundred and seventy-first part of the consumption, adding, that, under a system of free trade, even that quantity would diminish; so that the farmers could have nothing to fear. The fallacy of this supposition has been long exposed; nevertheless the argument survives. In the last year in which our ports were open, namely, in 1818, and, I think, not throughout the whole year, instead of 23,728 (Adam Smith's average quantity), there were 4,738,521 quarters imported, or about two hundred times as much, and nearly a fifth of the consumption of the people of the whole kingdom, if we are to credit our

statistical authorities<sup>1</sup>; and a great part of this quantity was imported without previous preparation on the part of the foreign growers for the British market. I ask the most determined supporters of a free trade in corn, what would be the limits of the supply, were the trade thrown open to foreigners? The limits of our ability to purchase and to pay. The foreign competitor would inevitably beat down the British grower in price, and overwhelm him with quantity.

But to the assurances of Adam Smith on the subject of importation, now succeed those of Mr. Jacob. The former, however, having totally failed, it is not surprising that the agricultural public place as little reliance upon the latter. As far as I have examined and can understand this gentleman's report, which, I confess, gave me much surprise, after the perusal of his former able and interesting works, I think its intention is to show that British agriculture need fear nothing from competition, in consequence of the small and diminishing supplies likely to be derived from abroad, which I understand him to estimate at not beyond ten or twelve days' consumption at the utmost<sup>2</sup>. His report is dated February 1826. Yet, with this very document in his possession, I find Mr. Canning stating, in his place in parliament, in March 1827, that the extraordinary influx of foreign corn, even in three months, in 1818-1819, had contributed to depress the prices in so "extraordinary a degree,"

<sup>1</sup> Colquhoun, Treatise of the Wealth, Power, &c. of the British Empire, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob, Report, pp. 12, 52, &c.

that "the effect of these three months' importations was felt in the depreciation of the market for three succeeding years<sup>1</sup>!" and was the occasion, as Lord Liverpool asserted, of the "ruin of hundreds<sup>2</sup>." That these statements and representations can be reconciled, is impossible; and there is no difficulty to know which ought to be received. The subject, unfortunately, is not a matter of argument, but of experience; the agricultural interest has not recovered to this hour the injury it then sustained, though fresh attacks are meditated upon it. If it be said that the report to which I have referred only comprehended a particular district of Europe; still it must have been selected as the most important and governing part, otherwise the whole thing would degenerate into an intentional juggle: and what would then become of the ingenuousness of those who founded upon it those arguments which they made decisive of the general question, and who, indeed, originated the inquiry for that purpose? But I acquit those engaged from all such suspicions, by asserting its general bearing on the subject; and here again I shall drop mere argument and opinion, and conclude this part of the discussion by leaving in the reader's recollection recorded facts. In part of the year 1817, exclusively of the imports from Ireland, which, however, are most essentially connected with the subject, there were imported 1,801,230 quarters of grain; and in part of 1818, 3,530,670 quarters, and an immense and increasing quantity in the two first months of

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, Parl. Debates, vol. xvi. p. 766.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. xv. p. 1368.

1819, till the ports became closed. If such are the consequences of the accidental opening of an uncertain market, what would they be were it constantly free? The question has been already answered.

(17.) Nor is the effect of importation on the interest thus interfered with, one which can be estimated by a simple arithmetical calculation. It is perfectly well known, in every other market, that an over-supply inevitably occasions a far more than corresponding decline in price; one, indeed, not easily reducible to calculation, but not the less clearly understood. But, on this important point, I will avail myself of the language of a late work, which, as it appears to me, cannot be suspected of leaning too much to existing laws and privileges. “When it is considered that a comparatively very trifling supply beyond demand produces a very disproportionate effect upon the value of the aggregate quantity, it is certainly a duty incumbent on legislation to pause, ere, for the sake of experiment, they expose the several interests of the country to so extensive a change, as a comparatively trifling additional supply of corn is liable to occasion: that is, assuming forty as the quantity, and 240 as the value of the supply adequate to the demand, an increase of one has a tendency not merely to affect the value of the aggregate supply in its proportionate ratio of six, but of twelve; an increase of two, to the extent of thirty; and, of three, to the probable extent of eighty or one hundred. Consider, therefore, the produce of forty millions of acres of land (the quantity, or thereabouts, in a productive state in Great Britain) sufficient to yield an adequate supply; and 240 mil-



lions per annum, its aggregate value; the importation of one, or two, or three millions of acres of a foreign soil must inevitably lead to one or the other of the two following results, namely, either the supplanting of the cultivation of a corresponding extent of soil at home, or a derangement in the value, in the proportion just previously exhibited: and then, as the money value of the produce of the soil has a necessary tendency to govern the money value of all other productions, the depreciation extends through all the productive classes, whilst all those who subsist on the state taxes, to the extent of £52,000,000,—on a rent-tax of £40,000,000,—and on mortgages, and on other fixed money incomes, to the extent of ten or fifteen millions per annum more, are all benefited in a ratio proportionate to the depreciation sustained by the productive classes. The progress, therefore, of the effect of an importation of corn beyond the demand for immediate consumption, is first to depreciate the money value, at the expense of the occupier of the land, to the extent of the depreciation, depending mainly on the extent of the importation: the effect on the depreciation on the occupiers of the land immediately manifests itself to the labourer, and all that class of handicrafts and tradesmen more immediately dependent upon the occupiers and labourers of the soil; and it is not till exhaustion and degradation pervade the whole of this portion of the community, that the rent-tax, or, in other words, the landed proprietor will be materially affected by the measure of importation<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Statistical Illustrations, Disquisition, &c. pp. xix., xx.

Such are the views and calculations of these writers ; and it may be added, that computations on a similar principle have been constantly made, since Davenant's time to the present<sup>1</sup>. It has been always known that a deficient supply enhances prices far beyond a mere arithmetic proportion ; and it is as obviously, though not so alarmingly, true, that an excessive one has, inversely, a similar effect.

I copy a passage, from the same work, as to the effects of this measure on our interests, externally considered ; some connected with which, it is allowed, may be individually benefited, as Locke had observed long ago : “ But,” it is added, “ to use the pedantic language of the pseudo race of political philosophers, the benefit on an external interest is only arithmetical, whilst the derangement which it is likely to occasion (as previously shown), on the internal interests of the country, is geometrical. But say the advocates for importation and FREE TRADE, let the intercourse be free, and the thing will find its own level, and regulate itself. No doubt : let famine and its concomitant pestilence be free, and it will find its own level, and regulate itself. Had this doctrine been adhered to in Ireland, in 1822, Ireland might probably have found its own level, and regulated itself ere this. But further, say the advocates for importation and *free trade*, the advantages to be derived from an external trade in corn would produce such an internal excitement, by the increased remuneration for manufacturing labour, as to prevent that sort of depreciation and derangement here previously laid down. And was

<sup>1</sup> Davenant, Works, vol. ii. p. 224.

the power of supply of natural and of manufactured (or artificial) productions equal, the position would deserve investigation. But, whilst the supply of one, in a comparative sense, may be considered limited, and the other infinite, the only tendency of an unrestrained intercourse is to increase the supply of the artificial productions, until they lead to such an exhaustion of the physical, and degradation of the moral character of society, as to threaten the entire annihilation of all social order<sup>1</sup>."

(18.) The preceding forcible remarks have, in great measure, rendered it unnecessary for me to notice one grand argument in favour of importation, which is perpetually urged, and without which, indeed, the proposition would be a barefaced attempt to enrich a few at the expense of the increasing poverty and certain ruin of the country at large. It is this, that the measure would greatly increase, or, at any rate, secure our internal industry, by augmenting to an equal extent our foreign trade. Passing over the deep distress, and, indeed, the utter ruin which the measure would occasion to thousands in the transition, when those interests which had grown up and long flourished under a contrary system, would have to be at once trampled down and destroyed (considerations with which political economy never troubles itself); let us examine its pretensions on its own grounds. In the first place, it is not true, as far as arithmetic is concerned. Those countries from which we have received, and, on such a system, should again receive our principal supplies, I mean those to

<sup>1</sup> Statistical Illustrations, Disquisition, &c. p. xx.

which Mr. Jacob has directed our particular attention, are not the countries which have been the foremost to encourage our internal industry in return ; on the contrary, they have been amongst the last and most backward so to do. And again, those years in which we have made the largest importations indicate very imperfectly that we should have any corresponding increase in the demand for the products of our internal industry, much less that the money account, and, what is of greater moment still, the labour account would be balanced, in such momentous transactions. We have seen Mr. Canning's statement of the enormous importations terminating in February 1819 ; what effect had these on our export trade ? was it such as to compensate the putting out of employment, and pauperising or starving thousands of British labourers ? There was, on the contrary, a falling-off of many millions in its amount, compared with any year since the peace ; and, compared with 1815, of between twelve and thirteen millions, though the last-named year was one in which the ports were strictly closed, and less corn had come into the country than any year, save one, for the preceding three-and-twenty years.

(19.) But supposing we were to concede that the countries from which we should import (and the argument has no possible application to any others) would take our manufactures to an equal amount in value ; more they could not do—and it is far from clear, looking either at the past or the present times, that they would do that : the policy of the question is instantly decided, but in a very different manner to

what its advocates either do, or affect to, believe. The very reasons which might have been valid in favour of such an exchange in preceding times, the force of circumstances has totally changed, and converted them into insuperable obstacles against any such policy at present. I shall state the chief of these, and beg the reader's most serious consideration of them.

To produce a given value in agricultural products, and corn above all the rest, requires at present a far greater number of hands than to produce the same value, on the general average, in manufactured articles. If this were ever a matter of doubt, it no longer remains so, since the introduction and increase of machinery to so vast an extent has taken place, which has abridged human labour in the fabrication of the same goods, in a proportion that would be incredible, had it not been frequently calculated: while in agriculture (happily, I think, for mankind) there have been few inventions for "shortening human labour," of great practical moment, since the days of Triptolemus. But even before these recent mechanical discoveries had been generally introduced, Adam Smith said, "no equal capital puts into motion a greater quantity of productive labour than that of the farmer;" or, in other words, employs and rewards more human beings. What would he have said now? To exchange, therefore, our manufactured goods, especially as at present fabricated, for the agricultural products of another country, to the same amount (and that is all, I repeat, that the advocates of this free

<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, b. ii. ch. 5.

trade can or do hold forth), is neither more nor less than to exchange the labour of the FEW for the labour of the MANY, and that at a time when the general outcry is, that "the market of labour" is overstocked already, when a proportion of our people, unhappily too great, want employment, and when human beings are beginning to be pronounced redundant. The proposition has long been partially entertained and acted upon, and so far we have seen its consequences; accede to it fully, and the catastrophe of the country is at hand.

But it is singular enough, that, even were the converse of this position true, the argument in favour of internal cultivation is strengthened. Were it conceded that the same value in agriculture is raised by fewer hands than in manufactures, surrounded as we are by so many millions of uncultivated acres, what would the proposition of supplanting British cultivation then imply, but the exchange of that labour which is most profitable for that which is least so? In every point of view, therefore, the idea of being fed from abroad, is as impolitic as Nature meant it to be impracticable. Were we guided by interest only, we could not hesitate: "Of all the ways," says Adam Smith, "in which capital can be employed, agriculture is by far the most advantageous to the society<sup>1</sup>."

(20.) But to return. If we should lose so vastly by the proposed exchange, in regard to the quantity of labour employed, we should suffer infinitely more in regard to the quality of the labour thus thoughtlessly

<sup>1</sup> Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, b. ii. ch. 5.



bartered. We should exchange, in very many cases, labour in its very nature essential, for that which is often superfluous;—constant, for that which is fluctuating;—permanent, for that which is uncertain;—productive, for that which is not seldom unprofitable;—healthful and moral, for that which is injurious and demoralizing; and above all, and to a very alarming and increasing extent, the labour of man for the labour of machines.

Such is the Glaucus bargain which our political economists are urging the country to conclude, as soon as possible. A few individuals, it is not meant to be denied, would be gainers;—a few floating capitalists and foreign traders,—political swallows, who could follow the summer of prosperity through the earth, and who, perhaps, as “citizens of the world,” would feel little regret in so doing: but those whose fate and fortunes are united to their country, and whose hearts are as indissolubly attached to it, would remain to feel the consequences, and feel them in their posterity to the remotest generations; when all that would be preserved to them, worth cherishing, would be the remembrance of those days of British greatness and glory, which would then have set for ever.

(21.) Hitherto, in this hasty apology for British husbandry, a defensive line of argument has been principally pursued; and before it is concluded, and a few strong reasons, of a more positive nature, are adduced in the same cause, I will attempt to show that the main reason advanced in favour of the proposed revolution, in our system of national industry, is founded in delusion, and is at utter variance with

the nature, as well as the history of the human race. It is, that cheap living is necessary to support manufactures and commerce. Even were this position true, it is not impossible but that the nation might buy the gold too dear which would thus find its way into the pockets of a few; such as those, of whom Locke observes, that "they may get by a trade that makes a nation poor<sup>1</sup>." Let us, however, attend to this fundamental axiom of the free-trade system. Reasoning, *a priori*, it is not at all plain that cheap prices would encourage industry; the presumption is, indeed, directly to the contrary—that they would probably be the means of relaxing that necessity, which has been elsewhere shown to be the mainspring of all human prosperity<sup>2</sup>. No foreign trade can either be commenced or supported without an internal one; and the most extended commerce and manufacture can only rest upon the solid basis of internal industry and wealth. Lord Bacon has therefore remarked, that "home trade is the foundation of foreign;" and that agriculture is the foundation of home trade, I think, none will contest. But mere reasonings upon any subject, concerning which a direct appeal to decisive facts may be made, are idle and absurd. Let us, then, examine whether trade, or rather foreign trade, has ever been founded upon cheap living; and without tracing the rise and progress of commerce in mo-

<sup>1</sup> Locke, Considerations on Lowering of Interest; Works, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Temple (applying, I think, the observation to the Dutch, whose industry he attributes to their necessities): "Men naturally prefer ease before labour, and will not take pains, if they can live idle."—"Men," says Dr. Franklin, "do not work for pleasure, but generally from necessity."

dern times, till it left, in great measure, the southern parts of Europe, let us limit the inquiry to its later history, during which it has made such gigantic strides. Where did it first flourish the most extensively, since its revival? In Holland, certainly. Supported and fostered by cheap living? No man will so far expose his ignorance as to assert this; or deny that the period of the greatest relative superiority of the United Provinces, in this respect, to all the world, was when they were, beyond all comparison, the dearest country in it<sup>1</sup>. Holland, at that period, fed far dearer than England; now, wheat is there little more than a third of the price here. But as, in the former country, while provisions have declined in price, trade has declined with them; so, in the latter, trade has advanced with the improvement in the price of food. England has now assumed the first rank as a great manufacturing and commercial nation; and at what period was it from whence its unrivalled career may be fairly dated? From the very time when its internal industry, its agriculture, was effectually guarded and supported: from thence, to the present time, it has gone on, extending its commerce and accumulating its capital, not by the extinction of cultivation, but by fostering it. We are become, it is true, the dearest country in Europe; but the very same causes

<sup>1</sup> Puffendorf says of Holland, "Every thing is very dear;" and again, "All sorts of victuals are taxed and sold at an excessive rate."—(History of Europe, p. 268.)

Andrew Yarrenton, in his *England's Improvement*, says, "All people that know anything of Holland know that the people *eat dear* and *pay great taxes*," (p. 7.) See, likewise, Sir Wm. Temple, Sir William Petty, Mr. Locke, Mr. Ray, and others, on this subject.

have rendered us the most industrious, and the most successful.

(22.) So stands the argument in reference to the past, and it most exactly coincides with the present state of the question. If we ask those who speak so much about the high price of provisions, as being fatal to our foreign trade, from whose competition it is that they represent our trade as standing in the greatest danger; will they point to the serfs of Russia, the gesindel of Germany, or even to the citizens of America? The forges of Tula would expire to-morrow, were it not for the inhibitory system of the Russian government; and the rival manufactories of the United States disappear as suddenly, were their protecting duties withdrawn. It is from France we have most to apprehend, if we have to fear for our foreign trade at all;—France, which feeds the dearest, with the exception of England, of any manufacturing nation of Europe<sup>1</sup>.

But strange is it, that, with our present vaunted superiority from machinery (not to mention capital, which is now regarded as almost omnipotent), the argument for low prices is renewed with greater warmth than ever, and is principally urged by those who are attempting, as much as in them lies, to render manual labour unnecessary, and have partly succeeded in so doing. The price of coal has far more to do

<sup>1</sup> At the time I am writing, I perceive the difference in the price of wheat is less than three per cent.; (in France 22fr. 2c.; in London, 22 fr. 68 c.) The period, I presume, is peculiar, as the difference is usually much greater. But for several years past wheat has only been about one-fourth lower, on the average, than here; and other grain, the general food there, still nearer our prices.

with the argument of such, than the price of corn; but it is not the price of either that governs the question.

(23.) Nothing is more surprising than the unfairness, otherwise ignorance, with which this subject is usually treated. There are certainly some branches of industry in which other nations have those natural advantages over us that render it improbable that we shall ever be able to supplant their labours in those particular cases; nor can we reasonably desire that it should be otherwise. But as it respects our leading and staple manufactures, I fearlessly assert, that we are not contending with the low living, but with the high duties of foreign countries,—duties which will unquestionably be increased as our goods continue to cheapen, as the world cannot allow its industry to be entirely paralyzed in favour of our steam-looms, which would, if duly patronized, supply “the great globe itself, and all that it inherits.” On the contrary, paradoxical as it may sound, it is not the dearness of our manufactured goods, but their inordinate cheapness, that has rendered foreign countries less disposed to allow them entrance; it has naturally roused their jealousy, and rendered it imperative upon them to defend their own labour: and, finally, where there is a free market, I appeal to all late experience, whether it is the competition of foreigners that is to be the most dreaded and deplored, or that of our own manufacturers and merchants, who continue to glut, and consequently injure, every free market to which they have access, by a superabundant and inordinate supply.

(24.) The history of this outcry against high prices

is singular. It commenced at the time when agriculture was protected and was beginning to prosper; and since which period bread has been, relatively speaking, constantly lowering. From that memorable period our manufactures and commerce took a start, and down to the present days (and the period has been extended enough to afford the fullest experience) it is a matter of history that they have extended with a rapidity of which there has been, probably, no previous example. But, during all this time, as it respects that interest, "the cry has been still the same"—"We are injured, we shall be ruined by the high price of provisions, compared with other countries, our rivals<sup>1</sup>: let the government, to save us, withdraw its

<sup>1</sup> A copious collection of proofs of the universal prevalence of these complaints might be given; a very few, however, shall suffice as mere specimens.

In 1677, Andrew Yarrenton, in his then popular work (*England's Improvement*), says of the woollen trade, "Their (the foreigners) making cloth of cheap wool, and cheap victuals, will outdo us, and undo us too, if not timely prevented," p. 20.

"No news but the old news, a bad trade," p. 97.

The same author said, just a hundred and fifty years ago, what I will venture to say has been asserted every year since: "The coarse cloth trade is quite spoiled by the German manufactures," p. 110.

Fifty years afterwards, we find that there were several other countries; "The French, in particular, supplanting Britain in many markets abroad."—(Dobbs, *Essay on Trade*, p. 7, 1729.)

Sir Matthew Decker is quite copious on this subject, and has now become too popular a writer with our economists to render it necessary for me to quote him.

Nearly half a century after the last date, we perceive that it had been actually calculated that foreigners could carry on most branches of trade twenty-five per cent. cheaper than we could—"owing to the dearth of all the necessaries of life, for many years past."—(*Present State of Great Britain*, Pref., part i., page 6, &c.)

It is not necessary to multiply these quotations; they abound in all books upon the subject of trade, and in all representations and petitions upon it: it is still less needful to bring down the proofs to the present period, which the reader's recollection can fully supply.



patronage from agriculture!" At first the withdrawal of the bounties on that interest was only required. But the spirit survives, and now demands the destruction of the not very adequate protection which it still enjoys. Such, I say, have been the complaints during the very period in which British commerce was all the while rising to an unexampled pitch of greatness and prosperity, which was doubtless owing in a great measure to the wisdom of the course the country so long pursued, and which nothing will endanger or destroy, but an opposite policy. One advantage has certainly accrued from the continued agitation of this subject, if we know how to avail ourselves of it: it has directed to it the attention, and drawn forth the deliberate judgment upon it, of some of the ablest and most practical men that have ever lived in this or any other country; and with the views of a few only of these, I will illustrate the argument touching the patronage which low prices would be likely to confer on trade and commerce.

Locke observes, that the frugality and industry of the Dutch, and consequently their prosperity, was attributable to the high price of provisions amongst them; and hence, "they could buy our rape-seed, make it into oil, and sell it cheaper than we could<sup>1</sup>." The celebrated Ray attributes their prosperity to the same cause, "the dearness of provisions enforcing general industry<sup>2</sup>."

Sir William Temple, who had the instructive lesson which that people held forth to all Europe so long

<sup>1</sup> Locke, *Considerations on the lowering of Interest*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ray, *Observations on a Journey, &c.* p. 51.

before his eyes, has, amongst many other remarks to the same effect, these words: "If we talk of industry, we are still as much to seek what it is that makes people industrious in one country, and idle in another. I conceive the true original and grounds of trade to be, great multitudes of people crowded into a small compass of land, whereby all things necessary to life become DEAR<sup>1</sup>." The same author, speaking of Ireland, says, "in order to advance trade, provisions must be rendered so dear as to enforce general industry<sup>2</sup>."

"The reason," says an intelligent author of a later period, and an enlightened advocate of trade, "why commerce seldom flourishes in a fertile country is, because, land there being of small value, provisions are cheap and plentiful<sup>3</sup>."

"It is a certain fact," says another writer, "that manufactures never flourished in countries where bread, and consequently other provisions are very cheap<sup>4</sup>."

To such authorities as these might be added, were it necessary, the names of Sir William Petty<sup>5</sup>, Sir Joshua Child<sup>6</sup>, Gee<sup>7</sup>, and many others<sup>8</sup>, who wrote on the most important topics connected with our national policy. I shall, however, only add two others ; and first, Dr. Franklin, whose sagacity on such

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Temple, Works, vol. i. p. 60 (folio edit.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 114. It is somewhat singular that a later writer upon Ireland observes, that "the linen manufacture never flourishes when oatmeal is cheap: the greatest exports of linen are when it is dearest," p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Vindication of Commerce and the Arts, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Farmer's Letters, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Petty, Tracts, p. 240.

<sup>6</sup> Child, Essay on Trade, pref. xi., p. 17, &c.

<sup>7</sup> Gee, On the Trade, &c. p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Yarrenton, England's Improvement, p. 53.

matters, few, I think, will dispute. "Cheapness of provisions," says he, "makes the common people idle, and less work is done<sup>1</sup>." And lastly, Malte-Brun makes this striking remark, in his elaborate geographical work: "The facility with which food is procured, obstructs the growth of industry and the arts<sup>2</sup>."

(25.) But these last quotations remind me of what I should have regretted to have forgotten. We must do justice; the advocates of low prices, or, in other words, of unlimited importation, have no intention whatever of thus interfering with the necessity of industry in the lower orders. As a subject of declamation, low prices are brought forward prominently enough; but when we look for their explanation in the "science of political economy," the mask of superior humanity falls off, and cheap prices are contended for in order that low wages may be enforced: so that no good whatever would result to the labourers of the kingdom expecting what is promised in their hypothesis as a future contingency of their system; a prophecy which experience has again contradicted. Cheap places, in all fully settled countries, have been hitherto those in which the working poor have been the most degraded and depressed; and cheap times those in which they have been the most wretched. These facts, of such paramount importance, if the question is to be placed on the basis of humanity, have been constantly asserted, and I believe never disputed by those of our best writers who

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Franklin, Works, vol. ii. p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> Malte-Brun, Geog. b. xxiii. p. 602.

have paid the closest attention to the subject, and who were equally well qualified to judge by their intelligence and humanity<sup>1</sup>; and I shall only confirm my appeal to such by one more modern observer, who, in the new world as well as the old, seems to have paid particular attention to the condition of the working classes, I mean M. Simond: he comes to this conclusion; "the low relative price of food is disadvantageous to the poor<sup>2</sup>."

To show how slightly the contemplated lowering of the agricultural values of the country would affect the cost of goods on the general average, as now manufactured, I had entered into some rather minute calculations; but they are rendered unnecessary, as well as most of my preceding arguments, by the view of the subject which immediately follows.

Granting all that is asserted, and to its fullest extent, by those who contend that our manufactures only continue to exist and prosper upon a principle of competition, into which the price of food enters so deeply, let us see to what their own doctrine leads. The truer it is, the more disastrous and fatal must be its consequences.

If our foreign trade can only prosper by enabling our workmen to live as CHEAP, it will follow as inevitably, that it can only continue to do so, by necessitating them to live as LOW as their foreign rivals. And the latter necessity is, on any such principle,

<sup>1</sup> See Sir J. Child's *Essay on Trade*, pref. xi. p. 17, &c. Sir William Davenant's *Ways and Means*, p. 125. Yarrenton's *England Improved*, p. 53. Dr. Franklin, *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 160, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Simond, *Travels*, &c. p. 388.

unhappily far more urgent than the former, inasmuch as the difference in the nature and quality of the food of Englishmen, compared with that of these foreign competitors, is far greater than the difference in its price. Let a Frenchman and an Englishman, for instance, each preserving their respective habits of life, supply themselves at the same market prices; and the former, contenting himself principally with a vegetable diet, will subsist on less than half the sum which the latter must expend, to preserve in like manner his accustomed comforts. The difference becomes, perhaps, still more striking, if the comparison be extended to the other branches of their expenditure, such as their clothes, furniture, and habitations. For the truth of this statement, I may appeal to all who may have entered their respective dwellings.

If, then, it be necessary, in order to promote or secure our foreign trade, that our manufacturers should feed as cheap as the continental ones, I say it is at least twice as necessary that they should live as poor; and then, since, after all, the lower ranks are the great consumers as well as the producers, what becomes of our internal industry, either agricultural or manufacturing? It needs no reply, nor, indeed, can sophism invent one: ruin awaits both. If this, therefore, be the final consequence of adopting the principles and policy of the new school, better would it be for England were Berkley's wall of brass thrown round our Island, to protect its abused inhabitants from a system whose tendency is to depress them to the level of the lowest, the cheapest, and the most beggarly country that it can discover; constantly starting such as the competitor

of England. The products of human industry, in which we can compete triumphantly, are many and important ; there are others again to which competition would be ruin : our ancestors carefully made the distinction, and the nation profited, and whole classes of the community were preserved, by this policy. Enough of the products of human industry remain, on which to found the principle of a large and liberal intercourse ; and these Nature herself clearly indicates by a fair but different distribution of her varying bounties. But she has been more merciful than to constitute the staff of life one of these her peculiar gifts ; nay, she has interposed great, and what the advocates of importation would fain represent as insuperable, obstacles against a nation's relying upon the broken reed of foreign supply for its daily bread. But on this subject more hereafter : in the mean time we are told, by our political economists, that things will find their own level, if left to themselves. This is true, and it is for this very reason that we object to their policy and their plans ; we do not wish to see the peasantry of England, under their skilful management, balanced with the boors of Russia. As far as the system has already gone, it has sunk the middle ranks, once the strength of the country, into the lees and dregs of wretchedness ; while, in these national agitations, the bubbles have risen from beneath, and covered the surface of society with froth.

(26.) But the financial obstacles in the way of a free trade in corn, and cheap prices, did none else interpose, are insuperable. To say not a single word about the disposable revenues of the country, and which, we



are at present informed, cannot be materially reduced<sup>1</sup>, let us advert to its fixed incumbrances, I mean its debt, amounting to considerably above 800 millions sterling; a trifle, which the partisans of the new system rarely think it worth while to recollect, in any of their arguments and calculations.

That the value of the real property of the country, or, in other words, of its products, determines in great measure all other values throughout the whole kingdom, the settled incumbrances alone excepted (and even those, though in a ratio directly adverse, generally speaking, to the other national interests), few, I believe, will controvert: so at least argue the partisans of the new system, even as it regards the value of the products of the steam-engine, and would persuade us to act accordingly. Now, to reduce these values, at once, throughout a whole country, entirely unincumbered, would render that country neither richer nor poorer: it would, indeed, by greatly altering the proportionate value of real property, and all money debts and engagements, involve hundreds of thousands of individuals in distress and ruin; but the depression of these would only be the elevation of others, which is just what our political economists mean by things finding their own level. But, touching the national incumbrance, unexampled in magnitude in the history of human affairs, these projected alterations would become, in their issue, matters of overwhelming import; just as they should have the effect of lowering the money value of the real property of the empire, would they increase the pressure of its

<sup>1</sup> See Edinburgh Review for October, 1827.

fixed debt. Where is the man of common sense that dares deny this? To the point, therefore; England has a debt of upwards of 800 millions, the interest of which she has engaged to discharge, not by a “corn rent,” but by a fixed sum of money, say 28 millions per annum. This debt, if it be ever repaid at all, must be repaid in great measure from the real property of the country: it will appear that even its interest is mainly provided for from that quarter, when the wealth of the country is traced to its source. Locke, speaking of land, in reference to the public incumbrance, says, “there at last it will terminate<sup>1</sup>,” and observes, that “taxes, however contrived, and out of whose hands soever immediately taken, do, for the most part, terminate upon land<sup>2</sup>.” He “challenges any one to show him a country” where it is otherwise<sup>3</sup>; and still he had Holland before his eyes, and, indeed, in his full recollection at the time, for he had just been alluding to it. I am fully aware that this doctrine is no longer considered orthodox, though the theorists who impugn it will just as readily overturn it, as they can his *Essay on the human understanding*. But, to defer to their superior light; supposing the share of the debt, falling on the real property of the nation, to amount to 600 millions only, of the whole,—and as other values, as before observed, are principally regulated by that of land and its products, the remaining property of the kingdom (exclusive of its coin, which is a trifle in this argument) is placed in precisely the same predicament, as that about to be explained;—supposing we

<sup>1</sup> Locke, *Considerations on the lowering of Interest*, Works, vol. ii. p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

estimate the annual value of the land, including "housing," at 50 millions, and allow this to pay rather less than  $3\frac{3}{4}$  per cent., which, considering the nature of the latter property, is, I think, not too high an estimate; then the real property of the country would amount to about 1,340 millions—about forty pounds an acre for the cultivated land, including houses. A fall of one half in the value of the produce<sup>1</sup>, the value of property sinking in the same proportion, or anything like it, would occasion a national bankruptcy. Assuming, in the first place, the worth of the real property of the country to be 1,340 millions, chargeable with its share of the public debt, 600 millions,—the value of its unincumbered part would of course be 740 millions: but, reduce the value of the former one-half, and the clear value remaining would be reduced to one-tenth of the former sum, and would amount only to 70 millions; a sum totally inadequate to sustain its possessors, or even to substantiate, prac-

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this supposition may be thought extravagant; but if the prices of corn on the continent are attended to, it may appear otherwise. Even within a few hours' sail of us, in the ports of Holland, wheat seems to be little more than a third of its value here. (See Returns of British Consuls, Paper No. 42, &c.) But it is still preferable to appeal to facts, where they can be obtained, rather than to rely on reasonings, however apparently clear and conclusive they may be. We have already seen that Mr. Canning attributed the "extraordinary depression" in the English market, which continued for three years afterwards, to the influx of foreign corn in 1818 and 1819. The extent of that depression we can easily ascertain; it is a matter of record. In the year preceding, viz., 1817, when the importation commenced, wheat was 94s. 9d.: in the year 1822, to which Mr. Canning asserted the influence of that importation extended, having regularly fallen during the whole time, it had sunk to 43s. 3d. But the very proposition of abandoning the poorer soils, which the political economists now always connect with the question, sufficiently substantiates the correctness of the foregoing view of the subject.

tically, their claims upon the property thus reduced in value. These sums and proportions may not be at all correct, nor do I contend that they are; but, under every possible rectification, the result of the measure would be the same,—national bankruptcy.

(27.) To enforce the preceding statement by a striking illustration, or rather demonstration, for such it will appear when duly considered:—In many parts of India, the produce of the land is, after the harvest, collected into a heap, from which the various claimants take their respective shares. This, however disguised by the artificial expedients of money or paper payments, is virtually the case everywhere. It is so here, even according to the showing of our political economists. How stands the case, then, in reference to England and its public debt? At the termination of the war, the nation had to pay its creditors in wheat, out of its heap, calculated on the average price of twenty preceding years, during which so large a portion of the debt had been contracted, about fifty-five millions of bushels. Twelve years afterwards, in 1826, being the last which I have examined the averages of, we were paying these creditors, out of the same heap, eighty millions of bushels. This has become sufficiently onerous. But our projectors have discovered a singular method of lightening the burden; they propose that (by throwing lands out of cultivation) we should greatly diminish the national heap, and, at the same time, double the claims upon it. In reducing the whole incumbrance into measures of wheat, as is done in many other calculations, I am illustrating the case rather

than accurately explaining it ; were I enabled to do the latter, the proposition would be still more odious. That part of the national incumbrance which is paid more directly by human labour, whether manufacturing or agricultural, (and it is now argued no inconsiderable proportion of it is so provided for,) demands an increase of that labour to a like extent. Allowing, as our political economists contend, that the price of labour is, in a great degree, determined by that of corn, the workmen of England would, under the operation of this universal reduction of prices, have to contribute so many more days' labour, in order to discharge their quota of the fixed incumbrance, as that difference amounted to.

(28.) But it is very seldom that the national debt is alluded to at all in these discussions, although it is that which renders the corn question so tremendously momentous in its bearings. It is, however, noticed in a late number of a periodical work, which, I understand, is with many reckoned great authority ; and where, consequently, one may expect to find the question I am considering presented in its plainest and most forcible form. It therefore behoves me, while on this subject, to examine, and I shall do so as briefly as possible, the article in question. And, first, it must be remarked, that the whole argument amounts to a full admission that the country, under its present circumstances, cannot possibly dispense with protection to its agriculture—no, not even should its own proposition be acceded to ; as, after making the effort recommended, it is still proposed to retain

a “constant duty of 5*s.* or 6*s.* a quarter<sup>1</sup>,” so that we are, after all, united, it appears, on the general principle; the difference being only as to the measure of its application. As to the mode by which it is proposed to overcome the difficulty: it is one which would have fully confirmed me in all my preceding views on the subject, had I entertained doubts respecting them; and which I think would, and I am sure ought to, have brought me over to them, had I previously held contrary opinions: for, assuredly, never was there a proposition submitted to the public, fraught with more folly and unfairness, than the one which is levelled against agriculture, in the article I have just been perusing. Passing over much that is positively incomprehensible, such as a sum of ten or twenty millions per annum, now in actual circulation amongst us, being “wasted without advantage to any individual whatever, and in fact as much destroyed, as if it were cast into the fire or the sea<sup>2</sup>,”—I shall merely allude, at present, to the direct proposition respecting the corn-laws. It seems to be acknowledged, that these cannot be materially altered without a great reduction in the national debt; and a reduction to the amount of one-half of that debt is proposed.

First, then, as to the calculations of the scheme. The debt is estimated at 760 millions, and, as I understand the article, the other property of the United Kingdom at 2,330 millions; an assessment of 12 per cent. on the whole of which, it is said, “would be about adequate to discharge the half of the existing

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh Review, No. xcii. p. 401.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 402.



public debt of the country<sup>1</sup>." But if the public accounts are correctly published, or are to be understood and relied upon, I find, in 1826, the public debt (for it would be idle not to include the outstanding and unfunded part of it) standing thus:—

Capitals unredeemed ..... £778,128,267

Unfunded Debt..... 35,849,588

£813,977,855<sup>2</sup>

Exclusive, it is stated, of £5,548,817 exchequer bills, to be issued; exclusive, also, I should suppose, of the debt due to the Bank, and that which, by a curious misnomer, goes under the name of the "dead weight:"—may it be a living one, as long as nature will permit; the debt of justice and of gratitude, which a grateful country pays to its veteran defenders, will be the last of which she will complain! These additional items will, I fear, augment the incumbrances of the country to a formidable extent. But, excluding them altogether, and taking the whole debt at only 814 millions, and the property of the country, as estimated, at 2,330 millions<sup>3</sup>, twelve per cent. on both would amount to £377,250,000, leaving £436,720,000; rather more than half, according to arithmetic, but involving a very trifling mistake, however, compared

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh Review, No. xcii. p. 408.

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, Parl. Papers, vol. xv. pp. xi. and xix. Since writing the above, I have seen the statement, made by the Right Honourable Robert Peel, which stands thus:—

Capitals unredeemed . . . . . £777,476,000

Amount of the unfunded debt outstanding . 34,770,000

£812,246,000

To this sum must be added the items mentioned above; and, if we are to break up the "monopolies," I should presume the East India debt, &c.

<sup>3</sup> Edinburgh Review, No. xcii. p. 408.

with those which are fallen into in making up this "half."

To say little at present about the proposal of the plunder of the property of great numbers of our fellow-subjects, who, under the direct encouragement of the legislature, have embarked their capital in what our writer calls "monopolies," (which, however, are monopolies of this peculiar character, that they are open to any individual who may choose to participate in them); and to advert, principally, to the way in which it is proposed to deal with agriculture: talking about "the forced cultivation of the inferior soils" (and pray what cultivation is there that is not forced?) it is intimated that they should go out of that state. As this is the favourite and perpetually repeated maxim of the whole school, it becomes a matter of much importance to inquire what proportion of the country they mean to include in this comparative mode of description; and what is the amount of "the inferior soils," the "poorer land," which, according to the notion of these patriots, must be "abandoned:" but on this important subject we are left in the dark. We know what is properly so called is by far the largest quantity every where. Even in the Pays-de-Waes, "incontestably the richest part of Flanders<sup>1</sup>," and consequently of Europe, if not of the world, "three-eighths only are considered good<sup>2</sup>;" certainly nothing like so large a proportion could be so denominated in England. Mr. Ricardo certainly

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Mann, *Memoir on the Agric. of Flanders*, in his *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, vol. i. p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Radcliff, *Report of the Agric. of Flanders*, p. 162.

speaks out upon this point: he divides our soils, by way of exemplifying this idea of throwing lands out of cultivation, into six classes, putting half of them out in regular gradation; namely, the sixth, fifth, and fourth, by a continued fall of prices, which importation, it is not meant to be denied, would occasion; and he adds these ominous words, — AND SO ON<sup>1</sup>. These poorer soils, all such writers complain, require more hands to cultivate than the richer ones. This fact is conceded, and let it be borne in mind. What is it, then, that this constantly repeated proposal of putting the inferior soils out of cultivation amounts to? To speak quite within the bounds of probability and truth, it amounts, on their own principle, to this: to depriving, ultimately, a great proportion of the farmers of England of their calling, and a vast multitude of the labourers of England of work; and, consequently, that proportion of both classes, and their families, of their daily bread. Supposing we were to admit that much of the land, abandoned as corn-fields, would be then depastured, he knows nothing of his subject who would argue that this would continue the latter in employment: “It is husbandry” alone, as Sir Thomas More says, that “requireth many hands<sup>2</sup>.” But what are all these considerations, “to the cool-blooded calculators of the day:”—“Worshippers,” as Burke exclaims, “of trade and commerce, which,” says he, “are the

<sup>1</sup> Ricardo, *Principles of Polit. Econ.*, p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> *Utopia*, p. 60. Montesquieu says “Pasture lands find employment only for a few. Corn lands employ a great many men.”—(*Esp. des Loix*, l. xxiii. c. 14.) For the difference in the proportion, see *Farmer’s Letters*, pp. 45—84, 149.

gods of our political economists<sup>1</sup>." The grey-headed exiles, unknowing of any other employment, and not able to obtain any, if they could learn it, with their destitute families, are no impediment in the plans of these enlightened patriots; they will "find their own level!" and while the poor wretches are rapidly sinking to it, these heartless system-mongers earnestly advise the nation to withdraw all charitable assistance from them, and teach the wealthy and the fortunate, as far as in them lies, to exclaim concerning such in the ears of an offended Deity,—"Am I my brother's keeper?"

And not only would millions be thrown out of employment and bread by this proposition, but, what I am happy to see appears a heinous offence in the sight of our reviewer, as it regards the stock-holder, multitudes would be deprived of their property; the little freeholders of the kingdom, as before observed, principally owning the worser soils, and the great landed proprietors the richer tracts of country. This writer, being in all respects an economist, means to accomplish two objects at the same time. He proposes to be at once humane and liberal—at the expense of others—the East and West India proprietors. He proceeds, however, as all others invariably do who have similar purposes, by commencing with an attack upon character, when property has to be struck at. "They" (the West Indians, I presume) "are fosterers of a system of slavery." To be sure they are, and England, from the first, fostered them in it. I am for abolition, and ever have been, but not in the way of

<sup>1</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*, p. 117.

spoliation, but by contributing cheerfully my honest share towards carrying into effect so godlike an act: so that the national justice should be unsullied, while its humanity was exalted; and the merit of the act shared by a generous people that wills its accomplishment. Then the East Indian proprietors,—they, it seems, are “pampered and supported” at the expense of “the nation.” I, too, wish to see India governed in the name of George the Fourth; but I should never dream of the nation’s taking possession of the property of the Company, without taking at the same time to its debts: and I do not perceive that this calculator has made any provision for this item either, immense as it is in its present amount<sup>1</sup>. But to return to our little freeholder,—what has he done? Why he belongs, it seems, to “a caste:” reasons are given, not very creditable either to his character as a man or a Christian, why many thousands of such should, throughout the kingdom, be disbanded<sup>2</sup>. And this once I give the projector credit for some considerable share of prudence and just calculation: meditating the robbery of this “caste” (now, for the very first time, as I believe, insulted as a

<sup>1</sup> I cannot refrain here from pausing a moment, to put a case. I have in my eye two neighbours:—one a large stock-holder; the reviewer speaks very becomingly about the profligacy of attempting to lessen his demand, or deprive him of any part of his just claims. Another has her all (for she is a widow with a family) in East India Stock: this, as far as I can understand the proposal about monopolies, is to be seized, or at least rendered valueless, by the annihilation of the “monopoly,” for the public benefit. I confess I cannot discern why the Government of the country should ruin and starve the latter, after having hitherto “pampered and supported” her, for the purpose of serving the former.

<sup>2</sup> Edinburgh Review, No. xcii. p. 398.

body), it was well to recommend that they should be disarmed. But, seriously ; tens of thousands of these yeomen have bought their little property under the operation of that system of laws which, protecting the home grower, fixed and guaranteed, as far as legislation could do so, its value, but which, it seems, is now, for the public good, to go out of cultivation, and its value consequently be annihilated. If this principle is to be adopted respecting property, why need there be any difficulty about the public debt ? Annihilate the claims of all the creditors, at least the lesser ones, at once. Perhaps this idea has not been entirely overlooked in a calculation that makes 289 millions about the “half of the existing public debt<sup>1</sup>,” and 760 the whole of it<sup>2</sup>.

Thus is it, that, in the propositions of our modern patriots, the humble interests of this numerous “caste,” the little freeholders of England and Ireland, are wholly lost sight of. Those of the mere tenant have now and then been alluded to. Mr. Ricardo, I think, somewhere says, that their capital might be gradually withdrawn : but how much of it would remain, when the land, on which it has been sunk, goes out of cultivation ; how it is, in such cases, to be withdrawn, and where it is to be withdrawn to, are matters on which he has not entered. He does, indeed, say, that his implements, such as carts, &c., might be sold,—and in what a market ! all sellers and not a buyer ! The idea is laughable, only that it involves in it that universal distress which Sir

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh Review, No. xcii. p. 408.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 407.



Thomas More so accurately described and so feelingly deplored; when, prompted by the same selfish policy, lands were put out of tillage in his day, and turned into sheep-walks: were the same course to be again pursued, the consequences would be still more appalling.

But to return to the proposition of our reviewer. Schemes, such as that proposed, are generally accompanied with their proper antidote. In this instance, the meditated iniquity is neutralized by manifest imbecility. Notwithstanding, it must be apparent to a child, first, that the land which this plan would put out of cultivation, would be deprived of its value;—secondly, that the value or rent of the part which should still remain in cultivation, would be proportionably diminished; a fact which Mr. Ricardo himself has fully explained and proved;—and thirdly, that the price of labour, and consequently of all artificial productions, would be similarly diminished. Still, our projector, in levying his twelve per cent. on all the property of the kingdom, in order to pay off half (as he calculates) the national debt, has valued all the lands which his own project is to throw out of cultivation, and all those which may still remain in that state, though proportionably reduced (to say nothing about other descriptions of property), at their full value, when universally cultivated, and that value so prodigiously advanced by what is called a monopoly price for their products! He calculates, as I understand him, that the value of the corn annually consumed in the United Kingdom, by adopting his proposal (which still would leave a “constant duty of 5s. or 6s.

a quarter on importation<sup>1</sup>"), would sink upwards of nineteen millions ; a sum which, he says, is very considerably underrated : much of our supply would therefore come from abroad ; and yet, in his proposed impost, he values the corn-lands of the kingdom, as well those that shall be thrown out of cultivation, as those that may remain in that state, upon the old "monopoly" scale. Nor does the absurdity end here ; it has barely entered upon its career : entertaining, for a moment, the idea of our projectors, that some of the lands thrown out of tillage would be employed in pasturage, in addition to those already so occupied (and, if not, they must be utterly lost to the country), the deterioration in the price of the vegetable product, corn, would be trifling, compared with that of the animal products of the country, forming such an enormous item of national consumption. The former is to sink, at the very least, £19,200,000 ; how much then must the latter be reduced ? And yet these reductions, neither in one case nor the other, vast as they must necessarily be, and proportionally depreciating the money-value, at all events, of all the real property of the kingdom, are once taken into consideration. All the calculations are made upon the data of the old system, the high prices which it is the very purpose of the proposition to abolish. Without entering into a single computation, it is palpably plain that the remaining part of the debt would press far heavier on the property of the country than the whole of it now does ; and the nation would have to exclaim, in the language of an ancient poet, though

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh Review, No. xcii. p. 409.

applied in a far different sense, namely, in maintaining the cause of minute cultivation, instead of opposing it—"the half is more than the whole."

But as my primary intent, in defending the interests of our national agriculture, is the preservation of Ireland, I must not pass by the proposition as it affects that country; neither, indeed, does the reviewer. "As the whole empire," says he, "would be benefited—every part of it ought to contribute equally to that great object<sup>1</sup>." Ireland, I need not repeat, is almost exclusively agricultural; how she would be "benefited" by having the present protection of her industry and products withdrawn, and ten times the number of her population admitted as her rivals and competitors in the British market, is not explained. She is valued, however, on the foregoing system, at 333 millions sterling; and it is proposed to mulct her of nearly fifty of those millions, for the "benefit" of being deprived of her present "monopoly!"

To say nothing, then, about the little freeholders of the United Kingdom, who would be undone; the leaseholders whose property would be destroyed; the mortgagers who would be ruined; the multitudes of simple contract debtors who would be sacrificed; without a single whisper about any compromise or compensation, in any of these cases:—to mention not a word about the cruel attempt to brand, with the opprobrious terms of odious monopolies, interests in which the all of numbers has been embarked under the continued encouragement and protection of the

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh Review, No. xcii. p. 408.

country and its laws ;—not to dwell upon the shamelessness of the proposal of taxing the lands of the kingdom, at present cultivated, at their full value, for the direct purpose of making a part of them of no value at all, and greatly reducing that of the remainder ;—totally to divest ourselves, I say, of common feeling, as well as common honesty, what becomes of the practicability of such a scheme ? Why, even on paper, where almost every hypothesis works well, this manifests its absurdity. A man that can estimate the value of land, when its produce shall have sunk in price, as it is anticipated it would, as high as it was rated at under the monopoly so much inveighed against ; and, moreover, that bates not a farthing for those lands, now in full cultivation, but which, it is then plainly intimated, would not be cultivated at all, but abandoned,—is indeed a most singular sort of a surveyor ; he would value the Goodwin Sands at their worth in the days of the Conqueror, when they were covered with verdure or glowing with cultivation. Such proposals as these, for paying off the national debt, might have proceeded from some learned and patriotic professor of the college of Laputa. And yet this writer can sneer at such men as “ Lords Lauderdale, Malmesbury,” and others of “ our hereditary legislators<sup>1</sup>,” which, perhaps, may be deemed a sufficient example and apology for the freedom which I have, in turn, taken with him. He mentions Bonaparte ; has he forgotten his maxim upon the subject under consideration, and what he made the grand basis of all national prosperity ?

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh Review, No. xcii. p. 402.

Thus is it, that our political economists of the present day fearlessly contradict common sense ; pour contempt upon the authority of the greatest and wisest men our country has ever produced, and ridicule a course of policy by which the nation has progressively risen to the highest pitch of happiness and prosperity. Authorities rise into notice, not for their solidity and truth, but, like aëronauts, on the principle of levity ; many look up, and admire the more, the less they see and understand ; till at length our political economists are elevated into oracles.—“ These be thy gods, O Israel ! ”

To conclude the pecuniary part of the argument : while England has the immense fixed debt which she now sustains, to lower the value of the property of the country, is, in the like proportion, to increase the incumbrance ; no sophistry can deny, no cunning evade, this conclusion. If then, ages ago, it was deemed, as we have seen, the duty of the true politician to support the value of the property of the nation, it is a thousand-fold more indispensable to do so at the present time<sup>1</sup>. Hence it becomes a

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, while on this subject, the author may be permitted to briefly state the ideas he entertained on the subject of discharging a part of the national debt ; which his friends will recollect was a favourite subject with him, while it remained plainly practicable. It was this. While the paper system of circulation was in full activity (a system under which much of the debt had been contracted), and while, therefore, the nominal value of all property and products was high, he would have assessed the property of the kingdom one per cent. per annum, for ten successive years ; the debt discharged would, of course, have been taken up in investments in lands, sold for the purpose of such liquidation, which all its life-possessors, as well as others, would have been empowered to do. As the remission of taxes would have kept pace with this operation, the burden would have been little felt, but the national good would

question of the deepest concernment, even to touch the circulating medium of the country ; and this should not be done, I humbly conceive, with a view to diminish the money-values of the products of either land or labour. Every thing should be attempted to render it sound, nothing to contract it ; a course which seems perfectly clear, consistent, and practicable. But, with regard to the proposition I have been considering, the very attempt to carry it into effect would be universal confusion, and its accomplishment, ruin.

(29.) Finally : there is another, and a far more important reason against rendering this country dependent upon others for an essential part of her supply of bread, than any of those previously adduced, however momentous they may be deemed in themselves, or their ultimate effects. It is this: we should, by so doing, not only divest her of her present power, and lower her commanding attitude, but we should place her at the mercy of other nations. Not only would the lives of her people, as Tacitus deplored concerning the Romans, in their rich but degenerate days, be dependent upon the winds and the waves, but upon the still more uncertain policy of foreign countries. These, in a period of peace, on the occasion of

have been great. The labours of the bullion committee, however, forestalled this measure, or rather rendered it impracticable, and have, in their consequences, inflicted upon the country much of the evils and difficulties it has encountered. Cash-payment, in the strict sense of the term, I fear is but another word for an increase of the debt, and a reduction of the value of the real property of the kingdom. Could not a large issue of paper circulation for a certain number of years still render this plan practicable ? But, even were it accomplished, God forbid that the cultivators of England and Ireland should be beaten out of their own market by the slaves of Russia.



any internal failure of produce, would, of course, as has been already observed, serve themselves first; but, in a time of war, would not serve us, or be allowed to serve us, at all. Look into the annals of the British empire, and see how often and how long we have been at war, and not always, it may be hoped, wrongfully. If, then, the country which supplies us be in the possession, or under the control of our enemies, in what position will our political economists then have placed us? What will it avail, though the citadel of the liberties of the world be still surrounded by impregnable bulwarks, and garrisoned by a band of unconquerable heroes, if it have to be victualled by its enemies? Had Britain then the heart of Hercules, or the hands of Briareus, it would avail her nothing: some northern despot, conscious of his power, and not averse to its exercise, would have only to speak the word, and the courage that had awed the nations would become tamed, and the power that had, in turn, chastised them all, weakness itself. But even were these supplies always derived, by a miraculously fortunate chance, from countries not mingled up in hostilities against us, still their constant receipt could be secured only by the uninterrupted continuation of our naval supremacy, which another of the propositions of modern policy is, I fear, far from guaranteeing; or it must depend on the issue of battles where, on our part, the lives of myriads would be at stake, besides those engaged in the conflict; or, otherwise, on the state of the weather and the changes of the wind. It is thus that we are exhorted by our modern patriots, instead of cultivating our native fields, and clothing them with

sufficient and unfailing harvests, to—"sow to the wind, and reap of the whirlwind!"

(30). But it is in the very nature of all theories never to be embarrassed with any difficulties; these, however numerous or important, can always be met by accommodating the hypothesis to the occasion, or obviating it altogether by a prophecy. Thus, on a sudden emergency, like the one just anticipated, though wheat requires so much longer a period, both in the previous preparation of the land and in its coming to maturity, than most other kinds of vegetable food, still countries from which we had not previously purchased, and which, consequently, had not provided for our sudden demand, would doubtless be able to supply us, would be willing so to do, and be in a situation to act as they wished in this respect. Or, if so many rather nice contingencies should, on so vital a matter, rather alarm our apprehensions than allay them; why then our economists will promise us, in future, a reign of uninterrupted peace, and prophesy a political millennium;—not one, indeed, in which we shall beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning-hooks, and every happy inhabitant shall sit under the shadow of his own cultivation in peace and plenty; but one, on the contrary, in which the implements of agriculture shall be converted into "big-bens" and "spinning-jennies;" and all shall sit in the smoke of a steam-engine, and have their food brought to them from afar, at least such whose labour may be still demanded, and, amongst these, children and women! On which circumstances a few words are due. Most writers and travellers have hitherto held it an

unequivocal mark of barbarism, wherever the sex has been degraded into common drudges ; this, however, our present civilized system has long had the gallantry of doing in England, the effects of which, in a moral point of view, are too well known to need pointing out or proving ; and not only so, but even children are, by a solecism of speech, now become workmen, our language not having as yet accommodated us with an appropriate word for the occasion. The morning of life, which God and nature intended as a time of mirth and pleasure, is made that of imprisoning, unhealthful, and demoralizing labour ; and our political philanthropists wish to extend this system, instead of encouraging cultivation ; though no doubt their feelings would be severely shocked at seeing such treatment transferred to the brute creation :—as, for instance, were the farmer, providing himself with gearing and implements for the purpose, daily to labour a yearling foal at the plough, aye, and nightly, if it suited his interests ; cruelty like this, to animals, would excite universal sympathy and abhorrence, and probably travel the nation in ten thousand paragraphs : it is thus our delicate susceptibilities find a vent ! It is rather a melancholy task to trace the progress of the new system ; to anticipate its ultimate consequences, if every other interest amongst us must give way to it, is most appalling. In the times of ignorance, “ MAN went forth to his work in the morning,” he was the labourer of the family, and it sufficed ; but now his INFANT CHILDREN are demanded to make up his necessary means of subsistence, and too often become, not his assistants, but his rivals in

the market of labour, to use the phrase of the times ; so that himself is often now found there “ all the day idle, because no man hath hired him,” when the fashionable system of policy coolly recommends his desertion. In good times, as they are called, he sees his children go forth to their work in the *evening* (to save the capital of the machine owners), when the benevolent law of nature, universally obeyed throughout animated life, is reversed as it regards those to whom it is the most essential. To be sure, he has all along been informed and assured that these things were all for his advantage, especially when he has thought otherwise, and been turbulently disposed ; but he has been the truer prophet and political economist : his labour has become less and less valuable, till he is at length pronounced, on high authority, to be redundant ; and measures are at this instant being projected to send him out of his country. Inventions which retain the pleasing appellation of “ machines for shortening human labour,” are, to all intents and purposes, become machines for supplanting it, as far as possible ; in one sense, indeed, they are appropriately named, for they have the effect of shortening life<sup>1</sup>. Contrivances to dispense with this labour almost altogether are hailed as public benefits, and eagerly adopted. On this subject I shall not further express myself, but conclude with the language of an able article on political economy in the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*:—“ All the workmen of Eng-

<sup>1</sup> I take, from the same county, the following statistical facts, presenting the comparative law of population in an agricultural, and in a manufacturing hundred, in the same county (Lancashire). The numbers in each, at the ages specified, are calculated on a radix

land would be turned into the street, if the manufac-

of 10,000 children under five years of years, and are proportioned to the census of 1821, as then discriminated into ages :—

Ages.	Hundred of Lonsdale, North of the Sands.	In the Manufacturing Hundred of Salford.	Differ- ence.
Under 5	10,000	10,000	—
5 to 10	9,088	8,180	— 908
10 — 15	7,451	7,481	+ 30
15 — 20	6,588	6,483	— 105
20 — 30	10,003	9,781	— 222
30 — 40	7,967	7,046	— 921
40 — 50	5,841	5,050	— 791
50 — 60	4,486	3,130	— 1356
60 — 70	3,631	1,838	— 1793
70 — 80	1,862	792	— 1070
80 — 90	585	177	— 408
90 and upwards	69	12	— 57

This table, exhibiting so astonishing a difference in the ratio of mortality, does not include the great town of Manchester. Nevertheless, what a curtailment in the narrow span of human life does it exhibit, and what sickness and sorrow does it not imply in that contracted space ! The system begins to cut off life ere it reaches its prime, tainting, if we may believe our highest medical authorities, with those hereditary diseases which are already beginning to manifest themselves, the constitution of the mass of the people in such districts, and which may soon relieve our anti-populationists from their fears as to futurity. But, supposing the statistics of moral and political offences were added, which may very easily be done, then what sort of a picture would be presented ! These are of a still more appalling character. In the name, therefore, of philanthropy, patriotism, and religion, let those pause with whom such feelings are still more sacred than mere mercenary considerations, ere they plead for the extension of manufactures at the expense of the agriculture of the country. I am aware that other collateral calculations enter into the computations of the above table ; they are such, however, as, on the whole, will be found to heighten the contrast. These will be attended to in a subsequent publication, in which the subject will be found more largely discussed, and an opinion hazarded as to the proper remedy for that which none can refrain acknowledging to be a great and growing evil. Without entering into detail, the principle is this :—Nature, who for wise and benevolent purposes has rendered human beings dependent upon each other's labour, has likewise accurately balanced the wants that have to be supplied, by the number and natural capability of those that have to supply them. But she has not admitted into her calculations either infant or incessant labour. Man, excited by the inordinate thirst of gain, has, to his disgrace, resorted to both ; and he begins to be punished for disregarding her dictates, and those of humanity, by means of that over-pro-

turers could employ steam-engines in their place at a saving of five per cent<sup>1</sup>."

(31.) Much is said about arithmetic and geometric ratios in regard to the increase of food, population, the poor, &c.; but were we to calculate, on any such principles, the future deterioration in the wages of some of the most important branches of manufacturing labour, according to what has regularly taken place since the peace, melancholy indeed would be the prospect; the powers of production, that have to so great an extent supplanted direct manual labour, seem almost unlimited: not so the demand; that cannot go on indefinitely increasing; it may even not remain stationary. It is not very probable that we can monopolize our inventions, and still less so that the labour of the world can eventually be superseded by that of England. The result will, assuredly, be otherwise, and happily, as I believe, for every interest amongst us. None can desire the unlimited spread of a system which would degrade the condition of the people, and which Nature herself would visibly deplore, in the moral and physical deterioration of her offspring; when her fields would go out of tillage, and England become an immense factory surrounded by an uncultivated common.

duction which occasions the periodical recurrence of those distresses which, it is to be feared, will be thus increased, if not perpetuated. Meantime, who are benefited? My lady's robe may be finer by so many "lees;" but so, likewise, is that of my lady's scullion: while the producers are condemned to premature labour; to rags, and wretchedness; to immorality and crime, and sickness and death! Not only philanthropy, religion, and patriotism, but even policy and interest, dictate that the legislature should interfere; not, indeed, by proscribing human ingenuity, or its application, but by prescribing, equally for the advantage of all parties, the proper age and periods of human labour.

<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh Encyc. *in verb.* Polit. Econ.



Something might have been added to these arguments in favour of the agriculturists, by way of an appeal to the feelings and generosity of their adversaries ; but it would, perhaps, be useless. The parental interest of the country, from which most of us sprung, now called a “ monopoly,” instead of being an over-profitable pursuit, has long afforded those engaged in it a very inadequate remuneration, consigned them to hard fare, and many of them to ruin. The prices of produce are low, and still falling ; but this does not suffice. Meantime, many of those who are leading the popular cry, and hunting down agriculture, have been enjoying those luxuries which are rarely shared by those who produce them, and have risen to an affluence, by far less laborious pursuits, of which there have been few instances in the farming world, and certainly none recently. Such, in opposing agriculture, have had all the advantages which concentrated efforts confer ; which arise from their constantly surrounding the seat of government, and, above all, from their being backed by a number of powerful diurnal advocates, who are, as it regards themselves, certainly “ wise in their generation.” It will be difficult, however, after all, to show that the country, compared with the capital, including every town in the empire, is the dependent. The reverse is obvious. Agriculture is undoubtedly the parental and sustaining pursuit ; though some who are hostile to it, with the waywardness of an infant, and it is to be hoped with the unconsciousness of one, are attempting to wound the maternal bosom from which they are perpetually drawing their nourishment and growth.

I speak these things in no hostility, open or disguised, to the present commerce or manufactures of the country, much less to those engaged in them : impelled into the present system by the force of circumstances over which they had no control, many of these are amongst the most humane and patriotic of our countrymen, and are distinguished, in a nation “ whose merchants are princes and traffickers, the honourable ones of the earth,” by all that is elevated in character and praiseworthy in conduct. Nay, if there be any one point on which I feel more confident than another, it is this ; that it is the interest of such to oppose the undue extension of a system which meditates the discouragement, if not the destruction of agriculture, even more than it is that of the cultivators themselves so to do. A little consideration will convince us that, in the system of labour, a due balance of all the several parts is the best security for the regular movement and permanent prosperity of the whole ; and that an adequate and constant protection to agriculture is the true and natural limitation of profitable manufacture. Certain it is, that, were the absurd propositions of the day to take effect, the present cultivators, who would then be dispossessed of their employment, must seek it elsewhere ; there would be only one course open to them, and one, as I conceive, which would be highly prejudicial to the manufacturers : instead of being, as now, their best and steadiest customers, they must perforce become their rivals, and that at a time when the difficulty so often is how to dispose of the increasing quantity of goods at present fabricated. Pursuits, therefore, now but little profitable, would become not at all so, and,

from an increase of that competition which is already so prejudicial, would then become ruinous. Things would, indeed, "find their own level," but it would be the level of universal depression. The "artificial system," now so much inveighed against, which is made up of laws and institutions dictated by the greatest men our country has ever produced, would give way at its very foundations; and we should be made to feel the difference between it, and that "natural state of things," from which it has taken the persevering efforts of so many generations to elevate the country<sup>1</sup>.

(32.) In discoursing on the interests of Ireland, it is impossible to lose sight of its one great pursuit. I have attempted to justify the policy of protecting agriculture, even as it respects England, because I conceived this was the best and surest mode of pursuing the argument to a successful issue; and indeed it was impossible to discuss it otherwise. The facts adduced are of the most important character, and, I believe, are undeniably true; whether the deductions drawn from them are agreeable to reason, and sanctioned by experience, the reader must now judge. If, when weighing these reasons in his mind against others he may have heard adduced, the balance should

<sup>1</sup> Some of the strongest arguments I have adduced in behalf of effectually protecting British agriculture, are precisely similar to those which I find, since I constructed them, Mr. Huskisson had already urged, with great force and perspicuity, even when corn was about fifty per cent. higher than it is at present, and when, still, according to his views, bread was "*CHEAP, and altogether owing to a sufficiency of corn of our own growth.*" See his Letter on the Corn Laws, *passim*. I may likewise refer to some very able articles on the same important subject, which have, from time to time, been published in Blackwood's Magazine.

still seem trembling with uncertainty, let him throw the welfare, the subsistence, of millions of his Irish brethren into the scale ; let him recollect the millions of uncultivated acres in Ireland, and that those cultivated are not half laboured, and, consequently, not half so productive as they might be, were its agriculture better encouraged,—and the question is decided for ever.

If, therefore, you wish to afford employment to the multitudes in that country who are unwillingly idle ; if you would continue the labour of those already occupied ; if you would increase and better the condition of her industrious classes ; and, finally, if you would secure a large and permanent addition to the present supplies of the empire, defend from the ruinous rivalry of other countries, and continue to foster and protect the agriculture of Ireland ;—this, in connexion with those other natural remedies already adverted to, would commence a new era for that unhappy people, would diffuse individual comfort and happiness, and ensure the general prosperity of the country. Other expedients will be unavailing, and especially the present proposition of deporting the people ; an operation which it is evident must, on the principles of those who resort to it, be constantly repeated, entailing a new and perpetual tax upon one part of the British people, for the abhorrent purpose of getting rid of another ; for it is the height of lunacy to suppose that procreation can in future be limited by law<sup>1</sup>. With such un-

<sup>1</sup> Let as great a judge of nature as any who presume to decry and counteract her laws, I mean Shakspeare, speak as to the utter futility of all attempts at restraining marriage (and which, he says, are “ *not politic in the commonwealth*”), excepting so far as

occupied, untouched, internal resources, therefore send not forth our fellow-subjects in search of a precarious subsistence to northern deserts, from whence many of them, when conveyed thither, constantly escape ; transport them not from their own temperate climate to one, as the Portuguese poet sings,

—que de neve  
Boreal sempre abunda—

The hundreds of millions of unoccupied acres there form no better an argument for our neglecting and deserting untouched millions of our own, than they would that the universal nation should take flight, and, like a flock of northern fowl, migrate at once to that promised land. It is far less wild a scheme, and infinitely more patriotic a one, to clear the wilds and drain the bogs of our own country, than those of Canada ; such, on better authority than now exists, would constitute our finest soils<sup>1</sup>, while the expense would be beyond measure less ; the capital meantime would be preserved to the country, however expended ; and the public interest in it amply secured by

to spread universal immorality. He truly, though facetiously, says, “ *they will marry incontinent, or else be incontinent before marriage ;—they will together ; clubs cannot part them.*” And supposing any one, foolish and wicked enough, were (still to make use of his language) to “ *exhibit a Bill in Parliament for the putting down of men,*” knowing, as we do, how exceedingly small a variation in individual prolificness would change the national increase into an instant retrogression in numbers, were so infamous a proposal carried, then we may express the consequence, in the words of the same inimitable writer :—“ *If this law hold in Vienna ten year, I’ll rent the fairest house in it after three-pence a bay.*” But the folly of legislating on such a subject, either openly or covertly, would be nothing to the presumptuous wickedness of the attempt.

<sup>1</sup> See Young’s Tour in Ireland, vol. ii. part 2, p. 74.

the fruitful domains which would thus, from time to time, be pledged to the country; each being a new creation, not indeed extending the limits, but increasing and concentrating the strength of the empire;—a conquest of the ploughshare and the pruning-hook:—a career this, opening, at every step, fresh springs of plenty, and new sources of employment, never to be again dried up, or diverted into distant or adverse channels; in a word, enlarging the resources, improving the health, and beautifying the face of the empire, and by the very same means which redeemed this lovely country from the deformity and desolation in which it is first presented to our view, till “the wilderness became like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord!” The voice of nature; of patriotism; of humanity; of GOD! calls upon you to persevere. The spread of cultivation is no wild or impracticable plan; it is one fraught with all the blessings Providence has to bestow: it is a pursuit in which art and nature go forth hand-in-hand, to certain and unceasing triumphs, while the common mother, Earth, seems smiling upon the labours of her children, and the unclouded eye of Heaven looks down, well pleased, upon the exertions it has ordained and blessed<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps these words may be deemed enthusiastic; the thoughts, however, are those of truth and soberness, and are dictated by common sense, and sanctioned by universal experience. To Ireland they are peculiarly applicable; and happily her interests, if properly viewed, are those of the empire at large. As a far inferior island, Sicily, was long the granary of imperial Rome, let Ireland, cul-

<sup>1</sup> “God is pleased with cultivation.”—(Ray.)



tivated by a nobler race of freemen, become that of a still mightier, and, may it so please Providence! of a more permanent empire.

I have now propounded, as well as I have been able, the most natural and efficacious remedies for what I conceive to be the principal wrongs of Ireland, which I have attempted to trace to their real sources. In doing this, should my feelings have led me into any expressions unnecessarily harsh or severe, I shall deeply regret the circumstance. I must, however, observe, that, if called upon to defend them, "I the matter can re-word," in the stronger language of those whose knowledge of the subject is undoubted, and whose disinterested patriotism is beyond suspicion. Above all, if, on the subject of the remedies of Ireland, the discussion of which has been carried to so unintended a length, the foregoing propositions should be disputed, let it be remembered, that the main position of this work remains entirely untouched. It is not by dexterously shifting the grounds of the argument; by attempting to prove, for example, in contradiction to what has been incidentally advanced, that absenteeism is no injury to a country, or a provision for the destitute poor a national evil and a disgrace,—that the principle of population, as now held and applied to Ireland, is to be maintained. It has been distinctly disproved, that the distresses in Ireland are attributable to excessive numbers, inasmuch as those distresses existed, and in a still higher degree, when the population was notoriously scanty; and that, notwithstanding its augmentation, the increase in all the necessaries of life has

increased in a far greater ratio, till, in relation to the products and the people of the island, it is the former and not the latter that are redundant. Such is the conclusion, demonstrated by uniform historical facts, which no political sophistry can invalidate or evade.

§ XV. (1.) Hitherto the subject of the population of Ireland has been treated without any direct reference to the law of human increase, as developed in the introduction to this work, and which I have ventured to assure the reader has been demonstrated in reference to all other countries which furnish the statistical documents necessary to the proof. If, however, on due examination, the same principle be found to exist, and constantly operate in Ireland, then the answer to the propositions now made respecting that country is final and complete; and it will be found that the feelings of humanity are but other terms for the laws of GOD: then not only will the principles of patriotism and of sound policy rise in hostility to the projected measures, but the irreversible laws of Nature will peremptorily interdict their adoption.

I have already mentioned that I had long pursued the inquiry on the subject of population, and with one uniform result, without having once extended the examination to Ireland, conceiving that the information relative to that country was not sufficiently complete, and being prepared to find Ireland an unhappy exception to the operation of the general law of nations, for reasons already stated—yet an exception which decidedly proves the rule in question. But by proceeding to a further and more particular investi-

gation of the census of Ireland, as recently taken under the direction of government, I am now enabled to show that even Ireland, which, as before mentioned, has been often brought forward as contradicting the real principle of population, on the contrary fully corroborates it; proving, in unison with every other record of human existence which furnishes the necessary means of comparison, that the prolificness of human beings is regulated by their numbers; and furthermore showing, that it is by the increase of human beings that Nature, when not thwarted in her benevolent designs, improves the condition and elevates the character of her rational offspring. She may have been withstood, while accomplishing her sacred purposes in that country, by causes fully pointed out; but still, even in Ireland, she has not been wholly defeated; even there she vindicates her divine economy, and manifests her unerring laws.

(2.) In the late census of Ireland, the annual marriages and births are wanting, which omission seems, at first sight, an insuperable obstacle against instituting those comparisons which have fully established the regulated principle of human fecundity, in regard to all other countries furnishing the necessary means of information. But the census is divided into ages: we can, therefore, arrive at the results we seek, by another method; and one which, as being totally different to the former, if it present precisely the same fact, is the more satisfactory, the conclusions, thus variously obtained, checking and corroborating each other. In this census we have a column giving the number of children under five years of age: now, pre-

suming the proportion of marriages to be the same throughout Ireland (and if it vary, it will, if we may rely upon all other similar facts, so vary as to strengthen the argument), then, computing the proportion of these children to a given number of inhabitants in every province, and comparing these together, the order of their prolificness will be clearly indicated. Then, as we have the area of the provinces severally, as well as the number of inhabitants in each, we have the necessary facts for enabling us to determine, lastly, whether Ireland obeys the law of population for which I contend, as that of nature and of truth. In the ensuing table, the four provinces are taken in their aggregate amounts; the number of children under five, in each, being calculated on every twenty thousand of the inhabitants, in order to facilitate comparisons with similar tables and calculations in the work about to be published.

**TABLE** of the Four Provinces of Ireland, showing the Contents, Population, and Number of Children under Five Years old in each, in 1821; with the Proportion of the latter to every 20,000 Inhabitants; exclusive of exempt Cities and Towns.

Province.	Contents in Irish Square Miles.	Population in 1821.	Number of Children under Five.	Inhabitants to each square Mile Irish	Children under Five, in every 20,000.
Ulster .	4,894	1,990,471	294,062	407	2,954
Leinster	4,356	1,530,263	234,398	351	3,063
Munster	5,275	1,747,230	275,097	331	3,148
Connaught	4,108	1,052,454	174,923	263	3,232

Here, then, the principle of population exhibits itself as clearly as it has done in all the other countries which I have previously examined; the fecundity is greatest where the inhabitants are the thinnest;

and when we come to touch upon the comparative condition of these provinces, the demonstration will be the more striking, as it may certainly be assumed as a universal fact, that, where the population is in the easiest circumstances, the greatest proportion of children are there preserved. The least knowledge of the condition of the provinces of Ireland will suffice to enforce this observation, and will very greatly strengthen the striking results the preceding table exhibits.

(3.) As to the cities and towns of Ireland which are distinctly given in the census, they are only eight in number, and consequently too few to establish very clearly the surprising fact which, as I have stated in the Introduction, I have found to exist, in regard to the proportionate fecundity of the towns of England, which is, on the average, determined by their size. Nature, as I have observed elsewhere, though evidently conforming to certain absolute rules, yet rarely develops them very clearly in individual instances; they are to be sought for in the results of those great and general averages by which all her operations are usually regulated, and by observing which her laws are alone revealed. But, when closely examining the population of the hundred principal towns in England, I hardly expected to have found the law, referred to, in operation as it regarded them; nor did I conceive my theory required it: such, however, is the fact; and though the secondary causes which regulate the increase of mankind, from procreation only, in reference to the size of towns, are less obvious than those which operate in entire districts of considerable extent,

still, when examined in any considerable number of cases, they appear not the less certain, and strengthen the system for which I contend, by a series of minute, as well as general proofs, which I confess have surprised me as I successively discovered them.

The cities and towns in Ireland, of exempt jurisdiction, are only eight in number; hardly enough, therefore, to form those averages which, as it will be observed hereafter, are necessary to arrive at certain conclusions on the subject; but still even these show a manifest and striking tendency to conform to the law of human increase, as previously developed. This will appear from the following table.

Cities and Towns.	Population.	Children under Five to every 20,000.
Carrickfergus	under 10,000	3,251
Drogheda	10 to 20,000	2,927
Kilkenny	20 — 30,000	2,877
Galway		
Waterford		
Limerick	50 — 100,000	2,875
Cork	100 — 150,000	2,817
Dublin	150 — 200,000	2,598

(4.) But to return to the provinces. The foregoing calculations of the comparative fecundity of the four being formed on the gross amounts which the census furnishes of each; it may, perhaps, be said, the apparent diminishing ratio of human increase exhibited, in proportion to the condensation of the population, may possibly be accidental; which, in so few instances as four, is certainly a possible, though not, as connected with the previous proofs of the same fact, a



very probable conjecture. But to obviate this objection altogether, I will give two other tables; and, first, one in which the several counties are separately calculated as before, and the mean proportion of the whole in each province taken. Without giving these severally, which may be done, if the facts are doubted, by a reference to a succeeding table, these are the results:—

Province.	Counties forming mean proportion.	Inhabitants to a Square Mile, Irish.	Children under Five to every 20,000.
Ulster . . .	9	407	2,950
Leinster . .	12	351	3,079
Munster . .	6	331	3,139
Connaught . .	5	263	3,248

The preceding tables, relating to the provinces, vary very little, and either of them equally proves the important fact of prolificness being regulated as so often stated: the difference in the number of children under five, in Ulster, where there are upwards of four hundred inhabitants on the Irish square mile, and in Connaught, where there are only two hundred and sixty-three in the same area, it will be observed, amounts to ten in every hundred; a variation, which, it hardly need be said, must make a very great difference in the rate of increase in those two provinces, a fact which will be still further confirmed anon. The other two provinces, it will have been observed, class themselves in exact conformity with the same law of nature; giving it a species of proof of the most minute and satisfactory kind.

(5.) But furthermore; it is advanced, as one of the

main axioms of the forthcoming work, that poverty and privation are the great causes of a high degree of human fecundity; and any one acquainted, in the least degree, with the condition of the different parts of Ireland, must, in casting his eye on these tables, not only perceive that they are classed in reference to the density of their population and the measure of their fecundity, but likewise in exact conformity to their condition, in regard to every thing that contributes to or constitutes prosperity and comfort; and that Ulster, with 407 on the square mile, compared with Connaught, with only 264, claims for its inhabitants an individual superiority far more striking than the numerical one.

This important fact, true as it regards every other country, I must attempt fully to impress upon the reader's mind in reference to Ireland. Even in that unhappy country, in which the population has to contend with disadvantages as unnatural as they are severe, still that district is the happiest and the most prosperous which is the best peopled. The proof of this gratifying fact must be obvious to all who have seen the country, or who have informed themselves concerning the situation and conditions of its different provinces: contrasting the most densely peopled of these with that which is the least so, and the difference in this respect, it will be observed, is great. "The people of Ulster are," as Wakefield assures us, "in general more industrious, better clothed, and living in a more comfortable manner than in many other parts of Ireland<sup>1</sup>." This is the

<sup>1</sup> Wakefield, Account of Ireland, vol. ii. p. 730.

best peopled province of the island; Connaught the least so: of the latter, perhaps the best soil in the island, with only a population of 162 on the square mile, the same author elsewhere says, “The poor throughout Connaught live in a state of great wretchedness, oatmeal is a luxury which they seldom taste<sup>1</sup>.” Even Mr. Curwen, who, throughout his Irish tour, overflows with Mr. Malthus and his demonstrations, nevertheless distinguishes the cottiers of the north from those of the south, as evidently superior, notwithstanding it is quite clear that they have smaller farms and worse land: and adds generally, “I should conclude the people of these southern districts to suffer more privations than those in the north<sup>2</sup>.” But to advert to a period of general distress, as that of all others the best calculated to put to the test the important question relative to the comparative condition of different parts of the country: in the work of Drs. Baker and Cheyne, previously quoted, we find these minutely examined and classed, for purposes distinct from those to which I am now applying them; and are informed, on the result of actual examination, that “the circumstances of the people of Ulster and Leinster are more comfortable than in Munster and Connaught<sup>3</sup>; the great mass of the people in the southern and western provinces living more exclusively upon potatoes than those of Leinster and Ulster.” Here, then, we have the provinces of Ireland classed, in point of comfort and

<sup>1</sup> Wakefield, vol. i. p. 753.

<sup>2</sup> Curwen, *Obs. on the State of Ireland*, vol. i. p. 367.

<sup>3</sup> Drs. Baker and Cheyne, *Account of the Fever*, vol. i. p. 95.

well-being, in precise conformity with the density of their population, and inversely to their prolificness ; Ulster,—Leinster,—Munster,—Connaught.

If these facts require further confirmation, it is at hand. In the distribution of the succour afforded by the nation, as well as public subscription, on that afflicting occasion, every county in Connaught, and nearly the whole in Munster, participated, but none in the provinces of Ulster and Leinster : consequently, if the charity of the nation were not grossly abused on the occasion, though doubtless the distress was great throughout, it was so much the more urgent where the population was the thinnest (notwithstanding the known superiority of the soil) as to demand and receive the whole !

(6.) And it is likewise pertinent to remark, that another principle, which will be found much insisted on in the work to which I again allude, is exemplified in this comparative view of Ireland. It is there asserted, and I trust proved, that a country is prosperous, or otherwise, in reference to that necessity of exertion which numbers of inhabitants call into action, rather than from natural fertility of soil, or extent of territory<sup>1</sup>. Ulster, which, as before observed, now stands at the head of the provinces of Ireland, in regard to inhabitants, though the most affluent, is, however, “ the most mountainous and barren part of the kingdom<sup>2</sup>.” Connaught, on the other hand, the worst peopled, and confessedly the most wretched part of the country, is nevertheless “ the sweetest soil

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Campbell, *Historical Sketch*, &c. p. 371.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 371.

of Ireland<sup>1</sup>." Plenty, therefore, is diffused; at least that proportion of it which absenteeism allows to remain in the country, not in proportion to the prolificness of the soil, any more than the paucity of the inhabitants, but in exactly the opposite ratio.

(7.) Presenting, therefore, the foregoing calculations and results, not as conjectures, but as incontrovertible facts; not as accidents, but as the sure and constant effects of adequate causes; I ask those who are proposing to thin Ireland by clearances, dispersions, or emigrations, or by whatsoever methods, whether they will still venture to proceed? It is clearly true, in respect to Ireland, as I shall show it to be of all other countries to whose statistics I have been enabled to appeal, that to lessen the population at any particular time, or in any given district, by whatever means, would, agreeably to an irreversible and benevolent law of nature, be the certain means of simultaneously increasing the prolificness of the remainder, and that, without "room being made" for an increased number of marriages, as some, who have not examined into this singular, but universal fact, ignorantly suppose<sup>2</sup>. And seeing, moreover, that, even in Ireland, as well as every where else<sup>3</sup>, the distress

<sup>1</sup> Spenser's View of Ireland, Works, vol. vi. p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> The proof of this singular fact forms the subject of two chapters of the book so frequently alluded to, where it is shown to be a universal law of nature.

<sup>3</sup> I say *every where*. Thus, in North America, so confidently, because so ignorantly, appealed to on the subject of population, such was the case, even exclusively of the earlier periods of its history, which, as it is well known, were those of great distress. The full proof of this is reserved for a future occasion; one only instance shall be now subjoined. "The harvest hath once and again grievously failed in these years, and we have been struck through

is the greatest, and ever has been, at those periods and in those parts where the people are the fewest; and that larger numbers there, also, are but other terms for a greater measure of prosperity; on what imaginable foundation do our theorists rest their anti-national propositions? Presuming them ignorant of some of the foregoing truths, still, as the expedients to which they would resort, in order to cure Ireland, have been tried over and over again, ages ago, and have invariably aggravated the evils they proposed to eradicate, why are they still persisted in, at the expense of injuring one branch of the empire, and outraging the feelings of the rest? Supposing they could reduce Ulster to the “level” of Connaught, in point of population, and Connaught to that of Sutherlandshire, *cui bono*? I repeat the question: Is the distribution of the population of Ireland, taken in connexion with their condition, such as to sanction their views and arguments, or to contradict and silence them for ever? Even in Ireland, wretched and impoverished as she is, where is it that the inhabitants make the closest approaches to a state of happiness and prosperity, or, in a word, obtain the nearest to a fair share in the comforts which the empire at large administers to its people? Where, but in Ulster, in which, I repeat, there are 407 inhabitants on the Irish mile. Where is it that the wretchedness is the most conspicuous, and seems to be the most hopeless? In Connaught, where there are only 264, or about twenty

with *terrible famine*.—A lamentable cry of *bread! bread!* hath been heard in our streets.”—(Sermon, at Boston, September 27, 1698. *Magnalia*, b. viii. p. 113.)



acres to every family ! and where, by the bye, we are told, on indubitable authority, that the distress was at least as great as at present, when there were twenty acres to each individual<sup>1</sup> ! What is it that makes the difference ? I answer, in the words of one who wrote much upon the subject, and to good purpose, had he been attended to,—“numbers of men !” And yet these would, had they it in their power, create, what they are, I observe, perpetually raving about, “a vacuum :” God, however, has decided for a *plenum* ; and the inspired voice of nature and reason, as well as of revelation, proclaims his command, Multiply—*replenish* the earth ; and subdue it : and the experience of thousands of years has taught the world, and ought to have instructed such, that this is the only certain road to national prosperity, as well as individual happiness.

But to return to the arithmetic proofs which Ireland affords of the truth of the principle of population, so frequently asserted, and of which I wish to leave an undisturbed impression in the mind of the reader :—

(8.) There is yet a more strict method by which to put that principle to the test, than the one previously adopted, and one which will obviate the only objection which, as I can imagine, can be advanced against the foregoing results. It may be supposed that the different habits which obtain in the several provinces of Ireland, may have some considerable effect in pro-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Smith, Topographical Hist., pp. 75, 76. He exclaims, “Is it not amazing, that the most fertile part of Ireland, washed by so noble a river as the Shannon, cannot support its people with bread !”

ducing the facts in question : such, for instance, as the supposition that marriages take place earlier in one part than another, or other circumstances which may affect an extensive district, without extending over the entire country. In order to meet this remark, and to adopt the only remaining method of determining the point, and thus to ascertain, beyond any reasonable doubt, the absolute certainty of the principle already demonstrated by other and different modes of calculation, I shall, lastly, class the several counties of Ireland in the order in which the density of the population in each places them, without any reference whatever to the four grand provincial divisions of the country : and for the sake of comparison with the counties of England, which will be subsequently given, where the same important principle is developed by a totally different method, I shall give the inhabitants in the English square mile, and likewise calculate the number of acres to each individual, and divide the table accordingly. It will be instantly seen that the law of population conforms (though perhaps in a less striking and marked degree, for reasons previously given) to the principle already laid down, and which will be shown to exist in all other countries where the necessary facts for proving it are recorded.

Counties.	Province.	Contents in square miles, Irish.	Contents in English acres.	Population in 1821.	Children under five years old.	Population to English sq. mile.	Proportion of Children under 5 to ev. 20,000.	Mean No. of Children under 5 to ev. 20,000.	English Acres to each Inhabitant.	Mean No. of Children under 5 to ev. 20,000.
Galway	Connaught	1546	1,603,719	309,599	40,117	123	3173	3177	5.	3177
Kerry	Munster	1022	1,049,193	216,185	33,562	180	3105		4.9	
Wicklow	Leinster	486	504,792	110,767	19,024	140	3135		4.5	
Donegal	Ulster	1061	1,100,871	248,270	37,165	143	2994		4.4	
Mayo	Connaught	1235	1,280,772	293,112	46,711	145	3180	3152	4.3	3091
Kildare	Leinster	369	383,335	99,065	15,432	164	3155		3.9	
Clare	Munster	744	771,444	208,089	34,680	172	3333		3.7	
Fermanagh	Ulster	448	459,189	130,997	19,093	179	2915		3.5	
King's Co.	Leinster	440	457,164	131,088	21,096	183	3218	3091	3.5	3091
Eastmeath	Leinster	512	531,198	169,183	24,001	190	3015		3.3	
Leitrim	Connaught	400	414,639	124,785	21,205	191	3392		3.3	
Waterford	Munster	410	425,736	127,842	19,223	192	3007		3.3	
Wexford	Leinster	535	555,498	170,806	23,867	196	2794	3065	3.2	3079
Kilkenny	Leinster	469	486,567	158,716	23,714	209	2988		3	
Westmeath	Leinster	361	375,111	128,819	20,016	213	3107		2.9	
Tyrone	Ulster	724	766,908	261,865	36,885	222	2740		2.9	
Limerick	Munster	604	626,535	218,432	33,782	223	3093	3065	2.8	3079
Queen's Co.	Leinster	367	381,186	134,275	21,170	224	3153		2.8	
Carlow	Leinster	214	222,021	78,952	12,036	227	3040		2.8	
Sligo	Connaught	386	400,383	146,229	23,249	232	3179		2.7	
Roscommon	Connaught	541	561,573	208,729	34,641	237	3319	3043	2.7	2981
Tipperary	Munster	867	899,019	345,896	54,694	245	3153		2.6	
Londonderry	Ulster	479	531,684	193,869	27,415	248	2828		2.7	
Cavan	Ulster	470	487,620	195,076	29,734	254	3048		2.5	
Cork	Munster	1638	1,699,056	629,786	99,156	273	3148	2990	2.5	2981
Antrim	Ulster	605	674,406	262,860	39,999	274	3043		2.5	
Longford	Leinster	299	217,323	107,570	17,031	315	3166		2.	
Louth	Leinster	173	179,115	101,011	15,177	361	3005	2981	1.7	2981
Down	Ulster	514	564,651	325,110	49,344	367	3033		1.7	
Monaghan	Ulster	280	290,952	174,697	25,922	383	2968		1.6	
Dublin Co.	Leinster	221	230,121	150,011	21,834	417	2911		1.5	
Armagh	Ulster	283	309,663	197,427	29,505	428	2989		1.6	

The preceding table requires no comments. Taken promiscuously from all the provinces of Ireland, and consequently leaving no room for the suspicion that local habits, in reference to the age of marriage, or any variation in modes of life, can at all affect the conclusions, the counties are classed according to the density of their population respectively, which, as it will be observed, mingles the provinces throughout, and, consequently, the governing principle of human fecundity is the more satisfactorily developed. These, then, are the results. Where the inhabitants are from one to two hundred on the square mile (English), there the mean number of children, under five, to every 20,000 of the entire population, is 3,132 : where there are from two to three hundred on the same space, that number diminishes to 3,065 ; where from three to four hundred, to 3,043 ; where four hundred and upwards, 2,950 is the proportion. Or, to present the facts calculated on a somewhat different basis, where there is only from one to two acres of land to every single individual, the children under five average only 2,981 ; where there are from two to three acres, that average increases to 3,079 ; where from three to four acres, to 3,091, and, where four and upwards, it rises to 3,177.

(9.) Only two objections can, as I conceive, be brought against the preceding facts being finally conclusive of the argument, even had I appealed, in the course of my work, to none other. The first may be founded on the apparent aberrations, in particular cases, from the principle asserted ; to exemplify which, the different proportions are purposely exhibited in

the preceding table. To this objection I have elsewhere particularly adverted; Nature, in all her works, vegetable or animal, seems to abhor minute and servile exactnesses, and yet she accomplishes her purposes more perfectly and certainly than is ever done by the utmost uniformity of human operations. Dr. Dugald Stewart has a fine passage on this subject, and notices, in exemplification, the uncertainty of the number of the sexes, different families being singly considered, and yet the surprising accuracy with which she accomplishes her purpose on the totality of her operations<sup>1</sup>. He notices, however, that we must be in possession of an adequate number of instances, before we can observe with sufficient accuracy her laws. It is thus that I account for the surprising circumstance, that the principle of population now developed has escaped, as far as I know, all writers on the subject. Fixing their attention on individual cases, they have omitted to regard a sufficient number of such in connection with each other; or, doing so, have often perceived them to vary considerably, and have, therefore, failed to draw those conclusions from the records of human existence, which, as far as I have examined, they invariably furnish.

(10.) But a second objection to this principle of population, as proved from the census of Ireland, will, I am persuaded, be the one chiefly relied upon. It is this; that the greater the density of the population, the more the preventive check, as it is called, prevails. I must forewarn those who may read, and, perhaps, make some comments on this book, that

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Stewart, *Philosophy of the Human Mind*.

they must seek for some other objection than this ; for that point has been examined fully, and, in all cases, directly the contrary is the fact. This is a matter not to be determined, where the necessary documents exist, as they do in many countries, by reasoning upon it ; one way or the other, it is a matter of fact, and not a matter of argument. Arithmetic must decide it ; not that simple rule by which Mr. Malthus determines it in his own favour ; who, resting his whole hopes of his system on the alleged increase of this check (knowing, as he acknowledges, that the “ positive ” ones have declined), calculates its prevalence by simply dividing the population by the number of the marriages, and if these happen to be in a somewhat smaller apparent proportion than formerly (which, however, is rarely the case), he reckons the point settled : totally leaving out of his consideration the great increase which has, in the interim, taken place, in the expectation of human life, as it is called, which must occasion a corresponding increase in the co-existing population from the same number of births. Just in the same manner, in calculating the comparative prevalence of this check, in different countries, he has quite forgotten that the duration of human life, which varies so materially (in some of them as much as one third, taking his own authority), is an essential ingredient in the calculation. By losing sight of this, it is singular that the order of merit in which he has placed several different countries, in reference to their supposed observance of this “ virtue,” ought to be precisely reversed. It is surprising how he could have fallen into so egregious an



error; it is, however, essential to his entire theory, and its rectification, were there no other disproof of it, will shake it to its foundation. More on this subject I shall not add at present; it will be examined at large elsewhere: I will only remark, by way of illustration, that, supposing we were to calculate the prevalence of the preventive check for a nation of antediluvians, stationary in numbers, and living to the age of a millenium each; one annual marriage, it is evident, could only take place in every two thousand of the inhabitants; though every soul of them should enter into that state, and, consequently, “moral restraint,” as it is facetiously denominated, should have no existence whatever amongst them. But to return: I shall now simply assert that marriages are not proportionably more frequent where the population is the most scanty, but the reverse; and shall, in due time, produce a body of uniform and uninterrupted facts, in proof of my declaration, which will render it indisputable.

But the mortality, especially in infant life, which prevails in a particular degree, where distress is the most prevalent, must not be lost sight of, in adverting to the preceding documents—a fact which will materially strengthen the conclusions already drawn from them, if that can be necessary.

(11.) So far, I think, the argument is triumphant as to Ireland. But I have been enabled, as it respects other countries, to give historical proof of the principle for which I contend, and this I conceive to be one of the most interesting and important of its demonstrations. Ireland is a country where the population has probably fluctuated more than most others,

and, as such, must furnish a proof of this nature, if the principle be true, of a very minute and interesting kind, supposing we were in possession of the necessary data. During the course of this inquiry, I have cast my eye on such, and instantly put them to the test; with what success the following facts must determine.

Dr. Anderson has transcribed, in his *Commercial Dictionary*<sup>1</sup>, a printed list of the families in each of the four provinces of Ireland about the year 1733; which, according to the mode of enumeration then adopted, and corroborated by the statement of Dr. Maul, then bishop of Dromore, amounted to the following number of persons in each:—in Leinster, 653,020; in Munster, 614,654; in Ulster, 505,395; and in Connaught, 242,160; which give in the first province 150 on the square mile; in the second 116; in the third 104; and in the last 59. According to the principle of population for which I contend, the prolificness would be the greatest where the numbers on an equal space were the fewest; and consequently the increase, in such cases, the largest. Now it must be remarked, that the order in which these provinces then ranked, in reference to density of population, was almost directly the reverse to that in which they stand at present. If, therefore, through the intervening period of nearly ninety years, the increase has conformed to the law of population laid down, it will certainly amount to an additional proof of its reality and truth, of a singularly satisfactory character; as showing that that law acts upon a principle totally distinct

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *Commercial Dict.* vol. i. p. 98.

from any local peculiarities whatsoever. And such turns out to be the fact. To exhibit this, in the following table: the first column gives the population in the four provinces of Ireland in 1733; the second the number of Irish square miles in each; the third, the inhabitants on each of these at the above period; the fourth, the number of inhabitants in 1821; and the last column gives the result sought for, that is, the additions in each province, during that period, on every hundred inhabitants. The table, it will be observed, is arranged according to the comparative density of the population, at the former period.

Provinces.	Population in 1733.	Square Miles.	Pop. to each Square Mile, Irish.	Population in 1824.	Increase on every 100.
Leinster	653,020	4356	150	1,757,492	169
Munster	614,654	5275	116	1,935,612	215
Ulster	505,395	4894	104	1,998,494	295
Connaught	242,160	4108	59	1,110,229	358

Here again no comments are necessary. In Leinster, where there were at the former date one hundred and fifty in the square mile, the increase, during the period under examination, was one hundred and sixty-nine on every hundred; whereas, in Connaught, where there were only fifty-nine, the increase was more than double the former, and amounted to three hundred and fifty-eight. The remaining provinces, I need not point out, confirm the principle most exactly, and class themselves accordingly.

Mr. Ricardo lays it down as an axiom, in full conformity with Mr. Malthus's views on the same subject, that "population regulates itself by the funds which are to employ it, and therefore always increases

or diminishes with the increase or diminution of capital<sup>1</sup>:"—a position which may be pronounced to be as false in theory as it is in fact ; in a word, as opposite to the plain truth, in every point of view, as anything which political economy, which is constantly repeating it, has as yet uttered. It contradicts every physiological observation that has been made upon man, from the time of Hippocrates down to the present day, as well as the whole current of human experience. From the summit of Irish society—its peerage, to its lowest grade—the poor cottager of Connaught, the reverse of this confident assertion is the precise truth.

But, notwithstanding the ease with which proofs are dispensed with in the present day, and the audaciousness with which known facts are silenced or contradicted, to serve the purposes of our special political pleaders,—still I hardly think it will be maintained by any, that it has been to the superior plenty and prosperity of Connaught, compared with Leinster, that this vastly greater increase of the former is to be attributed. On the contrary, it was, and still remains, the most wretched part of Ireland ; and its condition, therefore, fully confirms the physiology of my system, and contradicts as decisively that to which I stand opposed.

Should it be objected that the period in question is so extended as to have gradually changed the relative density of the population of these provinces, and that consequently the demonstration is so far confused and unsatisfactory,—I will, to obviate this remaining objection (as I confess it to have some weight till duly examined), appeal to the increase of the different pro-

<sup>1</sup> Ricardo, Principles of Polit. Econ. p. 68.

vinces during about a third of that time, namely, a period of exactly thirty years, especially as, at its commencement (1791), the change alluded to had already taken place. Taking, then, the last enumeration of Thomas Wray, Esq., inspector-general of the hearth-money, the following table will exhibit the movements of the population in the several provinces; and again illustrate and prove, with singular exactness, the principle of human increase for which I am contending. I have again classed the provinces according to their relative density of population, that having, at the period referred to, become greatly changed.

Province.	Population in 1791.	Inhabitants on a Square Mile. Irish.	Population in 1821.	Increase on every 100.
Ulster	1,337,274	273	1,998,494	49
Leinster	1,111,512	255	1,757,492	58
Munster	1,161,138	220	1,935,612	66
Connaught	593,688	145	1,110,229	86

That the former of the columns of population of 1791 errs in deficiency, I think there can be no doubt whatever, when it is considered that it was founded upon fiscal data; this one cause, independently of others which Mr. Newenham has pointed out, compels us to believe that the assumed number of inhabitants in 1791 is short of the truth. But as the causes of such incorrectness, and more especially the motives of concealment, whatever they were, must have been equally operative in every part of the country, the deductions, as far as my argument is concerned, are equally conclusive. They prove that, on the very same ground, the measure of human increase, individually considered, is constantly regulated by the

existing numbers, and varies with every variation of the latter. Equally certain is it, that, in each of the periods I have been alluding to, superiority in condition has still accompanied that district which has become the most numerously peopled. This is a principle, indeed, which lies at the foundation of human society, and pervades the whole structure even to its loftiest pinnacle. Like the infancy of human beings, is that of the communities they form, scattered, ignorant, and weak ; but the Deity, who wills our happiness, and whose providence promotes it, has provided an inherent cure for these evils in the growth of their numbers : as these multiply, they increase in knowledge and prosperity and power, till they wax into mighty nations ; nor has there been an example of a country upon earth, in the possession of its natural advantages, where it has been otherwise.

(12.) Some observations, suggested by the last tables, I will subjoin, especially as so much is now said about the certainty of mankind doubling every five-and-twenty years, if unchecked ; a supposition, by-the-bye, which I have elsewhere demonstrated to be impossible, by a series of tables, constructed upon the very data of human prolificness and mortality, given by those who pronounce it to be so far within the compass of natural increase. We find, by the last table, that, even supposing the population of 1791 to be fully given, still in thirty years an increase of sixty-one only, on every hundred, had taken place ; and this increase of such a nature, and so distributed, as plainly to show that even that ratio will diminish as the population condensates. Oh, but (methinks I hear the



assertors of the superfecundity of the human race exclaim) you forget the checks! What checks, I ask? Not the direct ones, as they are called, such as emigration; that has been authoritatively pronounced to be "immaterial." Not war; that has ceased. Not infanticide; that never did prevail amongst this simple people. Not those unnameable offences which naturally flow from the discountenance of matrimony, and the substitution of "moral restraint," as it is facetiously denominated: no! such they have ever held in abhorrence. The preventive check has no place here; for we have it on the great authority himself, that "they propagate like brute beasts," and these, it is conceived, do not much regard it. It has, therefore, no existence whatsoever, according to their own showing; and, in proof of this, they appeal to the increase of the population there, compared with that of England. I accept this appeal. The population of Ireland has increased, in thirty years (even taking the estimate of 1791 to be complete), 61 per centum: the increase in the population of England, for a like term, supposing it to augment from 1821 to 1831, as it has done from 1811 to 1821, will amount to 55 per centum. In other words, every hundred individuals in England will, in the course of those thirty years, have multiplied into 155, as in Ireland they have into 161; a difference, on the whole, of about  $3\frac{8}{10}$  per cent., to be distributed through the space of thirty years; a difference sufficient, indeed, to establish the principle for which I contend, connected with other circumstances, but hardly amounting, I think, to an apology for all the hard speeches which have been uttered against the population of

Ireland, or the harder propositions which are made about repressing it, which now insult the feelings of the empire, and which, thank God, manifest as much ignorance of the rules of arithmetic, as they do of the laws of nature.—Again, if we still go back four-and-twenty years, which we are enabled to do by the same official documents, those of the hearth-money collectors, we find the population of the year 1767 amounting to 2,544,276; in 1791, on the same authority (and consequently, for the purposes of comparison, more satisfactory than any other), it was, as has been seen, 4,206,612. But this is an increase of above 65 per centum, and in 24 years only, instead of 61, that which took place during the latter 30 years. Before this period, the increase, resting principally upon private documents, does not appear to have been so rapid; which is perfectly consistent with my views of the effect of those vast emigrations then going on, in comparison with the number of the inhabitants; and likewise those sweeping mortalities and famines which formerly afflicted Ireland so deeply. For the last half century, however, the ratio of the increase in Ireland, notwithstanding the panic which has seized our anti-populationists, has been a greatly diminishing one; fully confirming, therefore, the preceding principle.

(13.) And I must further observe, that this increase in Ireland (small as it is, compared with that duplication, every five-and-twenty years, for which our theorists absurdly contend, making sixteen times as many people at the termination of every century as there were at its commencement) is not likely to be

continued: the same cause, pointed out elsewhere, in reference to England, which has occurred since 1801, and given a sudden and extraordinary advance to the population there, namely, the introduction of vaccination, having operated on that of Ireland, during the same term. Allowing the small-pox to have been the severe scourge represented, it must be quite obvious to the simplest arithmetician, that the relative increase cannot be continued, excepting some other discovery, equally efficient in the preservation of human life should be again made, which is not very likely, nor, indeed, possible; for there is no remaining disease so fatal to it, as the one thus extirpated. In comparing the population of 1801, thinned as it was by this pest, and that of 1821, which is freed from it, we must certainly find a much larger *relative* increase, than can possibly occur between 1821 and 1841, other things remaining the same. Precisely the same reasoning applies, though not in an equal degree, to the effect which the great improvement in longevity throughout Europe must have had in accumulating a larger co-existing population from the same number of births, than could have been the case before it took place. This consideration, also, ought to warn us against taking the ratio of increase generated by a comparison of two periods, so dissimilar in particulars most essential to the calculation: nothing but a continual increase in the duration of human life, so as to realize the reveries of one of the French philosophers, who imagined that man might at length survive mortality, could justify such computations. I see Mr. Finlayson calculates (erroneously, I think) the

increase in the mean duration of life at full one-third ; but as this improvement includes the effect of vaccination, its ratio cannot possibly continue. Enough has been said, to show that the relative increase which has taken place, both in England and Ireland, and, indeed, throughout Europe, during the present century, will not probably be maintained ; at all events, that, as yet, we are totally unauthorised to calculate upon such a result. In estimating, therefore, the future ratio of increase from that which has taken place between 1801 and 1821, we are comparing cases which are not parallel ; nothing could be so absurd as such a calculation, if transferred to mechanical philosophy ; even in logic it would instantly be rejected as one of the most palpable fallacies, as urging a *non tali pro tali* ; and still the political sophists of Europe, one and all, confidently calculate the future ratio of human increase by this necessarily fallacious method.

I might add greatly to the force of the preceding observations, by proving that the census of 1801, which is made the radix of these erroneous calculations, was grossly deficient ; but the proof of this important fact is reserved for a further opportunity.

(14.) Mr. Malthus, indeed, shortly after the introduction of vaccination, asserted, that either the proportion of marriages must diminish, or that some other “ drain,” as, I think, he terms [it, of mortality must be opened ; rendering, in my humble opinion, had his prognostications been true, vaccination a very doubtful blessing ; but directly the contrary is, happily, the fact : health has greatly improved, and

marriages have actually multiplied, since that period, in a most striking degree: in proof of which, I must again beg leave to refer to calculations already made, and about to be published; when the periods of duplication, on which so much stress is laid at present, by the principle I am opposing, will be shown to be physical impossibilities. I make these frequent allusions, whether judicious or otherwise, with the sole view of anticipating, in some measure, the possible objections of the reader, by assuring him that, in the system of population partly developed in this publication, particular arguments have been elsewhere pursued, and objections answered, which it was not practicable, either in the space or time which I allow myself in my present attempt, to attend to.

(15.) It may, perhaps, be expected that some notice should be taken of the incomplete census of 1813: about one-third, however, of the thirty-two counties which Ireland comprises are returned in it as deficient; and it is therefore more than probable that the rest were very imperfectly enumerated. Great obstacles were, doubtless, interposed against taking a correct account of the population on that occasion, it being the first attempt of the kind; and the numbers obtained through other official channels are, doubtless, on the whole, more correct. Still, however, as it is probable that, in the counties in which the measure was apparently successful, the deficiency was proportionate, we will lastly try whether the facts it presents are conformable, or otherwise, to the principle laid down, and, I trust, fully proved by the preceding calculations.

The succeeding table needs no explanation, being constructed on the same principle as those already given.

TABLE, showing the Comparative Increase in the Four Provinces of Ireland, from 1813 to 1821, calculated on the Twenty-two Counties enumerated in 1813.

Province.	Inhabitants to a square Mile, 1821.	Population, 1813.	Population, 1821.	Increase per Cent.
Ulster . . . . .	251	1,207,448	1,349,698	11
Leinster . . . .	216	837,951	979,616	16
Munster . . . .	204	1,273,149	1,523,798	20
Connaught . . .	162	489,576	626,626	28
		3,808,124	4,484,738	17

This table exhibits an increase of about two per cent. per annum ; far too minute a ratio to call for any interference with nature, I think, at present ; especially looking to the imperfect cultivation of the country, which a more liberal application of manual labour would render so much more productive, and the immense extent of surface still untouched. But inasmuch as the first of the two censuses was avowedly and greatly deficient, no such annual increase as two per cent. has taken place,—certainly far short of it ; consequently the meditated attempt is still less justifiable, and is in the highest degree impertinent.

To show, once more, that local habits or customs are not the causes which govern the variations in this law of human increase, the following table is lastly subjoined, in which the counties are classed, not under their respective provinces, but according to the number of statute acres which, in 1813, there were in each to every individual inhabitant.



TABLE, showing the Comparative Increase, in Eight Years, of the Population of twenty-two Counties of Ireland, calculated on the Censuses of 1813 and 1821, classed according to the Number of Acres to each Inhabitant.

Counties.	Provinces.	Acres to each inhab. in 813.	Population in 1813.	Population in 1821.	Increase per cent.
Down	Ulster	2	287,290	325,410	13
Monaghan	<i>Ibid.</i>	2.1	140,433	174,697	
Longford	Leinster	2.3	95,917	107,570	
Londonderry	Ulster	2.8	186,181	193,869	
Antrim	<i>Ibid.</i>	2.9	231,548	262,863	
			941,369	1,064,406	
Tyrone	Ulster	3	250,746	261,865	
Tipperary	Munster	3.1	290,531	346,896	
Carlow	Leinster	3.2	69,566	78,952	
Cork	Munster	3.2	523,936	629,786	
Queen's Co.	Leinster	3.3	113,857	134,275	16
Waterford	Munster	3.5	119,457	127,842	
Roscommon	Connaught	3.5	158,110	208,729	
Kilkenny	Leinster	3.6	134,664	158,716	
Meath	<i>Ibid.</i>	3.7	142,479	159,183	
			1,803,346	2,106,241	
King's Co.	Leinster	4	113,226	131,088	22
Fermanagh.	Ulster	4.1	111,250	130,997	
Leitrim	Connaught	4.4	94,095	124,785	
Kildare	Leinster	4.5	85,133	99,065	
Clare	Munster	4.8	160,603	208,089	
			564,307	694,024	
Mayo	Connaught	5.4	237,371	293,112	24
Kerry	Munster	5.8	178,622	216,185	
Wicklow	Leinster	6	83,109	110,767	
			499,102	620,064	

This table, again, requires no comment, and is the last that will be given; indeed, I am not aware that there is now any species of existing proofs, of which the principle at issue is susceptible, that has been omitted. I shall conclude my appeal to these documents, by observing, that to suppose the results thus derived from so many different and independent sources, all minutely and uniformly confirming the principle of population developed in these pages, to be purely accidental, would be to make rather too

large a demand upon the doctrine of chances, and rise into a much greater miracle, than believing them to be a part of that simple law of relation which pervades all nature, and by which an infinitely wise and powerful Being plainly accomplishes the purposes of his eternal and immutable benevolence.

(16.) Ireland, therefore, I must repeat, is no exception to the true principle of human increase ; a principle which, no more than the one that it opposes, can ever remain inert, and, like that, may be “known by its fruits.” It dictates to the feelings, and prompts the exertions of all who receive it. Demonstrably true, even as it respects Ireland, so it holds forth the most instructive lesson as it regards that country. It teaches those who have to do with its affairs, or who wish to dictate to and intermeddle with those that have ; a far surer, as well as happier method of serving and blessing that country, than either transporting the people, driving them from their farms, deserting them in their distresses, or diminishing their numbers, by any plans of cruelty or oppression, ancient or modern. It proves the utter futility of all such attempts, and that the law of nature is universal ; the same as it respects the Irish, and, indeed, all other people, as it was with the Israelites, who “the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew ;” and that the way of diminishing the fecundity of the Irish is not by the creation of vacuums, but by replenishing those already made, by the deserters and enemies of their country. As this true principle of human increase is understood, and prevails, feelings of confidence in an all-sufficient Pro-

vidence will be strengthened, and of cordial affection for our fellow-creatures revived; and benevolence, no longer paralyzed by the influences of the contrary theory, will renew its wonted exertions in behalf of human beings, in the way God and nature have heretofore dictated and blessed. Even policy itself may at length be pleased to think, that what it never can, and nature perpetually does, regulate, may be regulated for the best; and, dropping its dread of population, concede, at length, that to do justly and love mercy is the best and safest course for nations, as well as individuals; and that the surest way to preserve a people in peace and quietness, is to give them a permanent interest in the institutions of their country.

Instead, therefore, of adopting the measures now proposed, and recommended, indeed, a century ago, let us pursue a more natural, humane, and patriotic course. In the mean time let us speak less, and legislate not at all, against those poor labourers, who, being deprived of the work and bread that naturally belongs to them and to their country, pursue them to this; and who meritoriously take the proceeds of their hard earnings to their own domestic hearths,—a conduct that combines the very opposites of all the vices with which they are perpetually charged. Irish vagrants! Who are the real, culpable vagrants, ye imperial legislators, about whom ye ought to bestir yourselves?

(17.) Surely, Ireland, last of all countries upon earth, ought not to permit its people to starve from want of food, or suffer for want of employment. Respecting the former, its surplus produce, even now,

is probably greater than that of any other country in the world of equal extent; and its surface might, on the very lowest calculations which our practical agriculturists have ever made, sustain far above ten times the number of inhabitants that it now nearly starves; while "the wastes of the sea," to repeat Lord Bacon's expression, by which it is encircled, remain almost totally untouched. Demand for labour is, however, wanted, in order to accomplish any amelioration in the country; and that can never be obtained while the means of its remuneration are withdrawn, as well as the necessity destroyed, to so great an extent, by absenteeism; inflicting all those wrongs which have been the painful subject of consideration in the former pages of this publication. It is this grand evil, and the want of a national provision for the poor, which its conduct renders the more necessary, to which much of the distress and turbulence of Ireland has been distinctly traced. Surely that country presents a noble field for the exertions of the real patriot; there he might build himself an everlasting monument: the imperishable materials are at hand. Its natural capacities are unrivalled; so are those of its people; though both lie uncultured, abandoned, abused! In the character of its inhabitants there are the elements of whatever is elevated and noble; these, however borne down and hidden, are indicated wherever their development is not rendered impossible. Their courage in the field needs no panegyric of mine, and has never been surpassed; their charity<sup>1</sup>, notwithstanding their poverty,

<sup>1</sup> See Young, Newenham, &c. Report of Select Committee, iii. pp. 415, 453.

never equalled; even while I am thus writing, I will dare to assert, that, in many a cabin of that country, the god-like act of our immortal Alfred, which will be transmitted down to the remotest generations, the dividing his last meal with the beggar, is this instant being repeated. And their gratitude for kindnesses received, equals the ready warmth with which they are ever conferred. In the domestic sphere, according to their humble means, they are unrivalled in fidelity and affection. I mean not to contend, that they have not faults, and grievous ones; but these are mainly attributable to the condition to which they have been reduced, and the manner in which they have been so long treated. They, perhaps, *mirabile dictu*, feel no strong affection for those of their superiors, whom they rarely see, or see but too often to be insulted<sup>1</sup>,—but whom they are perpetually feeling; nor attachment to a government which they identify with their oppressors. But let them be treated as, it is confessed and declared on all hands, they ought to be: let their natural patrons and protectors return to them, not “for a short time,” as exactors and “drivers,” but, permanently, as kind and resident landlords; let labour be fostered and encouraged; let want be relieved, and life preserved, by a moderated system of poor-laws, which shall concede those humble claims to all, which God and Nature have immutably established, and which policy itself has long sanctioned<sup>2</sup>: in a word, let the

<sup>1</sup> These may be considered as strong expressions: a different opinion will be entertained by those who have had many opportunities of personal observation. See Arthur Young's Tour in Ireland, “Oppression,” pp. 29, 30, Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> While I am writing, an article is pointed out to me in the last

different ranks resume their equally essential stations, each performing their several duties ; and the social

numbers of an influential work, the *Christian Observer*, in which I greatly regret to find an attack is made, and in no very measured terms, upon our national charity. It commences by informing us, in effect, that, if it is not mistaken, there is no national provision for the poor enforced by law in any country but Britain, excepting Iceland. It is mistaken ; and, knowing only thus much of the subject, it is a pity that so long an article has been written upon it, in which errors as to facts, and, as it strikes me, in principles also, quite as glaring as this, occur throughout. I shall not refer again to the best part of Protestant Europe, and America, which have that legal provision ; or to the condition of those countries which are still without it ; or to our own previously to its establishment ; or to the practice of the primitive Church (as far as they had the power), in reference to it ; but again appeal to a higher and overwhelming authority in favour of the principle of a compulsory provision, now so much abused, and which it is proposed to destroy like another “ Carthage.” The Mosaic dispensation embodies that legal and compulsory provision in its divine institutions ; which, and voluntary charity, God hath there joined together, whoever may now attempt to put them asunder as absurd and irreconcilable.—See Selden, Schultens, Maimonides, &c., upon this point. And when it is considered that that system, thus dictated by an unchangeable God, forms not a part of the ceremonial, but of the moral code, not one jot or tittle of which is mutable ; that it appertaineth to that virtue which “ never faileth,” the arguments, or, as they may rather be called, declamations, against our system, which apply as fully to that established by the Deity, are really somewhat bold, if not presumptuous. After such an appeal, I shall not descend to minor arguments, otherwise the intolerable burden the proposed abrogation of the poor-laws would impose upon the willing part of the community, not the most numerous, and not often the most wealthy (religion instructs us to the contrary, in both respects), and the demand it would make upon the time, and especially upon the entire resources of such, would have the effect of drying up the founts of many of those foreign charities of the country which the work in question has so long patronized, and of intercepting much private beneficence now happily administered ; above all, after having robbed poverty of that decent provision which it has long enjoyed, and which is its *legal right*, it would, to the equal disgrace both of the rich and the poor, sentence the latter to the degradation of subsisting upon the precarious relief obtained too often by abject and repeated supplications, and by distressing and disgusting exhibitions ; with a swarm of other evils inseparable from mendicancy. But this work, I perceive, is turning its attention to modern political economy, the unrighteous Mammon, whose cause, however, I think it will



edifice, thus "compact together and at unity in itself," shall never again be shaken. These are the means, sim-

find difficult to reconcile with its former and more elevated service. It is now, I perceive, boldly espousing the most nauseous of the notions of that school. "The poor laws," it seems, "call a multitude of population into existence;" the "redundancy" of human beings is confidently asserted; a doctrine which, however fair in front, like Milton's Sin, enwombs a brood of consequences which are too loathsome to be described. Redundant! how can any one talk in the ears of the Deity thus, who believes in His superintending providence; in human redemption, general or particular; in the immortality and infinite worth of the human soul! We are little qualified, I fear, to decide on the rights of the poor, or their relief, when we approach the subject with the principles such language involves. The effects of these are obvious, and are, indeed, rarely disguised; and are not to be counteracted, by plentifully calling such "redundants," after all, "our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus," and so forth. It is language like this, connected with such views, that "sweet religion makes a rhapsody of words." There may be, no doubt, a mote in the eye of poverty; but it may be questioned whether any class amongst us is justified, at the present, in paying its first attention to plucking it out. The legislature, I perceive, is called upon to destroy this "Carthage," as the writer in question denominates our national charity. It will, however, be more wise, I think, than to make the attempt. One thing in this article has, however, given me much pleasure; the great unpopularity of any opposition to the poor-laws of England is expressed and implied throughout. Let us be told no more, then, that the provision for the poor is not a voluntary charity; it is such, nationally speaking, to all intents and purposes, even on the plain admissions of its impugners. As to the individual merit connected with the system, its advocates cheerfully resign, and are willing to forget it. But to repress further observations for the present,—I will only ask who that has seen its operation in this great manufacturing country, where the wages of labour, in many branches at least, are so unfortunately low, and where its demand is subject to such great and sudden fluctuations and reversals, but must instantly subscribe to its necessity? His Majesty's ministers said, during the great, and, as some asserted, unexampled manufacturing distresses of 1826, that the national charity was the proper organ of relief, and they said truly. While I am thus writing, a document appears, accompanied by observations as to the supposed alarming increase of the poor rates at present, which gives me mingled surprise and pleasure. All notice of the latter will be rendered totally unnecessary by a few remarks on the former. The account is made up for a year, ending March 25, 1827, and

ple and obvious, though deprecated by inveterate selfishness, and ridiculed by theoretic folly, which would,

consequently refers to the very period of distress alluded to, and which cannot be forgotten. The sums expended on the poor, the *unemployed* as well as impotent, amounted, it appears, to only 6,441,088*l.*; including the immense sums paid in the shape of wages, of which wealth actually robs poverty, to return it again in alms, accompanied with threatenings and insults. But, waiving this important consideration altogether, this is the fifteenth successive year in which these accounts have been published; and, behold! the expense of sustaining the suffering poor, in this year, distressful and gloomy almost beyond all precedent, was less than the average of the whole of these years! It was considerably less than the first of them, though the population had certainly increased, in the interim, 20 or 30 per cent.! Somewhat advanced, indeed, compared with the "prosperity" year; still it was less by above 20 per cent. than it was nine or ten years before! In the name, then, of humanity, of justice, and of truth, if such feelings and principles are still extant upon earth, let us hear no more mendacious appeals as to the relative increase of the poor-rates. Supposing, I repeat, we were to calculate the increase of other national statistical amounts in the manner we do the sums disbursed in behalf of poverty, what would be the conclusion we should arrive at? Why, that the county rates, for instance, would "absorb," and in no long time, the entire property of the country, and that every individual of us would speedily become felons! Such calculations would be sufficiently absurd, if applied to these particulars; they are worse than absurd as applied to poverty; they are palpably false! Those who profess to attend more to the numbers than to the expense of the poor, are still wilder in their calculations. "A quarter"—"nearly half"—"larger half"—"seven eighths," &c., are the proportion of paupers. The poor are, in the mouth of such, what "the rogues in buckram suits" were in that of Sir John Falstaff, always exaggerated and still multiplying; and the allusion holds good yet further,—for while they are bemoaning over the spread of pauperism, and prophesying that they shall be swallowed up by it, their own increasing size often affords them a tolerably good security against that danger. Their "sighing and grief blows them up like a bladder." Some of our calculators, however, I observe, are diminishing their estimates concerning pauperism, and, amongst the rest, Mr. Malthus: a quarter of a century ago he had it "the larger half" (p. 536); now he quietly substitutes, I perceive, "one quarter," (5th edit. vol. iii. p. 416.) This looks well, but hardly comports with his ideas concerning the poor's soon absorbing all the rents, &c.

While concluding this note, I receive a little work, forwarded to me, on some of the topics discussed in the preceding pages, but on

and in no long time, renovate Ireland, and repay the wrongs of many generations; which would waken a nation into gladness, and spread a smile over the face of nature itself. The benevolence of the great would then be reflected in the thankful and gratified demeanour of their inferiors<sup>1</sup>. The mutual pleasure of giving and receiving favours would fill the cup of

very opposite principles; it is, however, obviously impossible to animadvert upon it at present. I shall just allude to what is said upon "pauper marriages," which the author intimates ought to be placed under legal control. Independently of the immorality which such interference would inevitably occasion (if it could then be called immorality), the cruelty of such a scheme is monstrous. A being more cheerless in health, more helpless in sickness, in a word, more desolate, living or dying, than the unmarried labourer, can hardly exist: concerning such, above all others, the declaration of the Creator is emphatically true, "It is not good for man to be alone." Seeing, then, the tyrannous propositions on the one hand, and the disgusting expedients on the other, to which the modern principle of population drives many of its adherents, strange is it that any one human being can be brought to believe that it is the system of nature. But the cruelty of all this interference on the part of man is nothing compared with its presumptuous ignorance. An insect on the narrow shore of time, mounted on a grain of sand, calculating from the tide of life flowing towards it, a universal deluge! and calling upon its fellow-insects to stem the restless waves! its organs meantime infinitely too minute to perceive the eternal hills by which it is bounded, or to hear the voice which proclaims "Hitherto shalt thou go and no further"—the voice of Him who is the fountain of that ocean of immortality, and who "measureth its waters in the hollow of His hand!"

<sup>1</sup> That nothing short of this can secure the peace and happiness of any community, is no new discovery. Isocrates has a beautiful passage on the subject, the extreme appositiveness of which, in reference to what I have been asserting throughout the preceding pages, will, I think, clear me from the charge of pedantry in subjoining it: Οἱ τε γὰρ πενέστεροι τῶν πολιτῶν τοσοῦτον ἀπείχον τοῦ φθονεῖν τοῖς πλείω κεκτημένοις, ὥστε ὁμοίως ἐκλήδοντο τῶν οἰκῶν τῶν μεγάλων, ὥσπερ τῶν σφετέρων αὐτῶν ἡγούμενοι τὴν ἐκείνων εὐδαιμονίαν αὐτοῖς εὐπορίαν ὑπάρχειν· οἱ τε τὰς οὐσίας ἔχοντες, οὐχ ὅπως ὑπερέωρων τοὺς καταδεέστερον πράττοντας, ἀλλ' ὑπολαμβάνοντες αἰσχύνην αὐτοῖς εἶναι τὴν τῶν πολιτῶν ἀπορίαν ἐπήμυνον ταῖς ἐνδείξαις.—(Isoc. Oratio Areop. pp. 290, 291. *Cantab.* 8vo. 1729.)

human happiness, agitate and heighten its pleasures, even to the very brim. The various and too often discordant elements of society would become purified of their inherent evils by this salutary admixture. Its several classes, weak in their division, and hostile as separate from each other, would, as they were drawn closer together in the bonds of mutual interest and affection, become indissoluble : not only, as the fabled bundle of sticks, would they remain united and unbroken, but each, like the rod of Aaron, would again branch forth and blossom into all the charities and virtues of domestic and social life. Then, indeed, the different ranks of society, instead of so many steps of a dungeon, descending down to lower and still lower depths of misery and degradation, would, like Jacob's ladder, seem reaching up to Heaven, and the Angels of Mercy and Gratitude would be seen ascending and descending thereon, for ever !

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## POSTSCRIPT.

It has been suggested to me, that it would have been well to have accompanied the foregoing tables respecting Ireland with at least one or two of those referred to in the Introduction, as establishing the principle of population universally, in order to silence the objections which may be advanced, founded on the supposed prevalence of some local or peculiar habits in that country, affecting the question. It is obviously too late for me to do this at present; I will, however, so far avail myself of the suggestion as to give a synopsis of one of them, and shall purposely take that which relates to a country whose population is thin and scattered, and represented, in all other respects, as in a condition directly opposite to that of Ireland; one in which the “preventive check” is supposed hardly to exist at all, or, if it exist, is not to be sought for in the more densely peopled northern states, where, as Dr. Franklin says, they “marry in the morning of life,” but in the southern, or slave-holding ones, where the population is the scantiest; there, indeed, we are told, *moral* restraint, unhappily, is not unknown. But, above all, I select the instance about to be given as that on which the “geometric ratio” of human increase professes to be solely founded; I allude, of course, to the United States. In this extract, then, of one of my tables, the first column expresses the relative condensation of the population, by dividing it according to the number of acres to every individual throughout; the second, the number of states and territories in each class; the third, a given number of females (100) between sixteen and forty-five; the fourth, the proportionate number of children under ten years of age to each of those hundreds. The particulars of the States, and the numbers on which the calculation is formed, will be given in the work referred to.

TABLE, exhibiting the variation of Prolificness in the United States, as regulated by the Condensation of the Population throughout.

Acres to each Inhabitant.	Number of States and Territories.	Females from 16 to 45.	Children under 10, to ea. of those 100 Females.
Less than 10	1	100	127
10 to 20	3	100	139
20 to 30	3	100	150
30 to 50	5	100	171
50 to 100	4	100	192
100 and upwards	11	100	203

But to particularize the New England States, where the inhabitants are the most stationary, and of uniform habits:—

States.	Inhabitants to a square Mile.	Females from 16 to 45.	Children,—10, to each 1000.
Massachusetts . .	75	1000	1268
Connecticut . .	56	1000	1282
Rhode Island . .	48	1000	1314
New Hampshire .	22	1000	1384
Maine . . . .	7	1000	1621

In the statistics of America, as in those of Ireland, the marriages and births are wanting: this omission, however, instead of weakening the proof of the real principle of population, has actually confirmed it, by leading to an equally conclusive demonstration of its truth, calculated on totally different principles. In the rest of the tables, however, the more usual method is pursued, and not only with equal success, but with this singular advantage to the argument; they will show, at the same time, the ignorance and error which have prevailed relative to what is called the “preventive check;” taking away therefore, at once, the main support of the contrary system, and answering the sole objection, as it is conceived, by which the one now developed can be assailed.

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That to the height of this great argument,  
I may assert ETERNAL PROVIDENCE,  
And justify the ways of God to man!

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Safe in the love of Heav'n, an ocean flows  
Around our realm, a barrier from the foes;  
'Tis ours the sons of sorrow to relieve,  
Cheer the sad heart, nor let affliction grieve;  
By Jove the stranger and the poor were sent,  
And what to these we give, to Jove is lent.









